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03

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Wild
WILDLIFE
AND ENVIRONMENT

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Man of mystery

WARNING

The activities covered in
this magazine are dangerous.
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skill, regard to safety, and
equipment could result in
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Please ensure that submissions are accompanied by an envelope and sufficient postage.

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Rough stuff

Violence comes to the bush

BASHINGS WITH AXE-HANDLES AND BASE-ball bats, vehicles destroyed, a town's power supply cut off... The Serbs in Kosovo? Religious rioting in Ambon? Independence polling-day in East Timor? You're getting closer, but you still have a way to go. These are in fact less than idyllic scenes which have occurred in some of Victoria's most beautiful forests in the Otways and East Gippsland this year. Yep, in Victoria, this year.

Chris Baxter

recently indulged a life-long obsession with Victoria's Mt Tambo by completing an ascent by a route attempted when he was 'still in short pants'.



We all know that we live in a time of enormous social and economic change. This change is producing a legacy of stress, dislocation and suffering with a terrible human toll strewn in its wake despite our current unprecedented levels of material wealth and technological sophistication. This toll is most evident in our cities. They are replete with the victims of heroin abuse, road rage—and the sense of hopelessness of that new 'anything', the retrenched and apparently unemployable, middle-aged man.

But until now in the bush, at least, we could always take refuge from these final-days lunacies and renew ourselves. Not any more, it seems. The alleged attacks by pro-logging interests against peaceful forest camps of people—including women and children—opposed to logging Australia's remaining native forests (described in Green Pages on page 85) are a sad testimony to how low we have sunk as a society. Apart from the obvious, utterly reprehensible barbarism of such actions, they represent a serious assault on institutions that are pillars of our society: free speech, the right to protest—and democracy. We have inherited these precious freedoms from our forefathers and it should be of great concern to us to see them threatened.

The naïvely charitable might consider that behaviour to be just the product of a few redneck yobbos. (It would appear, however, that some such attacks are organised and carefully orchestrated.) But we can no longer be certain that even people we think of as being among the most peaceful and responsible—fellow bush-lovers—are as imbued with 'peace, love and happiness' as we were once entitled to think. I suspect that the letter (*Wildlife*, page 9) detailing a confrontation with 'Wild Jim' (it sounds like the name given to a rogue wild boar!) on a Blue Mountains, New South Wales, bushwalk describes an event that, while fortunately unusual, is not unique.

Let us stand up courageously for what we consider important and at the same time ensure that we are not part of the problem. The best place to start is always 'here and now'; in all our dealings with everyone with whom we come into contact.

The Wild–Nikon Photo Competition

Announced in *Wild* no 75, this competition had us deluged in slides, particularly in its closing weeks. However, we've now managed to sift through them and have been able to identify a winning entry. It was submitted by Graham Jay of Flemington, Victoria, whose prize is a Nikon Protea S, Advanced Photo System SLR camera valued at \$825. (No doubt this camera will put him in the box seat to win our next photo competition!) We expect to publish the winning entry in a future issue. (In the meantime, we have published a commendable entry in this issue—see *The Wild Life*, page 21.) In addition, we've identified the winners of commendable entries who will now have received DuPont Coolmax prize packs valued at \$25, which includes a pair of Coolmax Mentor Global Trekker socks and a cotton drill cap with Coolmax embroidered logo.

Wild Web site secured

Now attracting almost 80 000 hits a month, the *Wild* Web site (www.wild.com.au) has recently been enhanced by the addition of secure on-line ordering. You can now order/renew your *Wild* subscription and order other *Wild* things with your credit card from our on-line order form without submitting your credit card details to an unsecured site.

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Chris Baxter

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'Day-tripping yahoos'

...to evolve into 'weekend warriors'?

I WAS GREATLY DISMAYED, READING RICK Jamieson's letter (*Wild* no 76), regarding the declaration of Wollemi Wilderness Area and the subsequent required installation of gates. Surely the installation of gates, and the consequent restriction of road access in the canyon catchments, can only benefit the long-term conservation of these canyons.

As it stands, these canyons are only attractive to the canyon day-tripper courtesy of Mr Jamieson's guidebook and the presence of these roads (which, as a result, have grown longer, wider and more eroded). I find it particularly hypocritical for Mr Jamieson to complain about the potential overcrowding of some canyons, a situation which he has actively developed. My only concern with the installation of the gates is that it may lead to the development of poorly located and overused camping areas within the canyon labyrinth: as 'day-tripping yahoos' evolve into 'weekend warriors', I trust that any future editions of Mr Jamieson's guide will refrain from recommending camping sites, leaving camping location decisions to the sensibilities of those who venture into this area. Maybe canyoning has to rediscover its bushwalking roots; this can only be a good thing.

Rob Mann
Valley Heights, NSW

Rick Jamieson complains in *Wildfire*, *Wild* no 76, about 'an extra two kilometre walk each way to approximately 30 canyons' caused by road closures in wilderness areas. If people are not fit enough to walk this short distance on a fire track, the question begs to be asked whether they should be canyoning at all. People have to realise that canyons are not fun parks, they are unique wilderness environments, and less than an hour of easy walking is a negligible price to pay for helping to preserve these areas. If canyoneers don't think walking this extra distance is worth the visit to the canyon, perhaps they should consider a new hobby. I have not heard any other objections to these closures, nor has anyone else that I've talked to. Perhaps those too lazy to walk an extra two kilometres are also too lazy to object.

Mitchell Isaacs
President
Sydney University Bushwalkers
Baulkham Hills, NSW

Where wouldn't roads go if Mr Jamieson had his way (*Wildfire*, *Wild* no 76)? Mr Jamieson bemoans having to walk several kilometres along a fire track to his favourite Blue Mountains canyons.

We should support every effort to rectify the legal and illegal vehicle-track constructions

in recent decades. Many tracks used now for easy access to canyons near the Newnes Plateau at Wollemi were the result of mining exploration, small-scale timber extraction, fire-fighting efforts and, more recently, private and commercial operators pushing ever closer to canyon entrances.

The Wollemi Wilderness declared last year is an attempt to put a limit on where a car can go. This means in some places ending the past 'free-for-all'.

This will allow the consolidation of recreation impacts to designated areas, and protect many canyons from high usage. It also allows us to look around once we leave our cars and appreciate the value of our National Parks and wilderness areas...

Andrew Cox
(by email)



Trap

Bob Burton's article 'Kiwi logging scheme beached' (Green Pages, *Wild* no 76) tells only part of the story. The beech forests in question are not pristine primeval forests; they abound with possums, stoats and other introduced vermin. The Timberlands scheme involved finding dying trees, felling them, and removing logs by helicopter. This created little disturbance, but provided enough profit that some was used for pest control, so that the logged forests had a richer bird population than comparable unlogged forest. Sure, many are pleased that logging has stopped, but who will provide funds to con-

tinue pest control? The New Zealand furniture industry will probably switch to tropical hardwoods—will they come from sustainable sources?

I've been a keen bushwalker since childhood, a *Wild* subscriber since issue 1, and a forester all my professional life. I see no conflict; the challenge is to see the big picture. The New Zealand beech decision was a win for one non-government organisation, but was it a win for the environment? Many environmentalists including Claude Martin (President of World Wildlife Fund) think not. We may have lost the world's best example of sustainable harvesting.

Jerry Vanday
Southern Cross University, NSW

Jerry Vanday argues that the way to 'save' New Zealand's temperate rainforests is for the government-owned logging company, Timberlands, to log them.

No logging, no funds for predator control, worse environment, the argument goes. However, Timberlands spent many times more on its PR campaign than it ever did on predator control. Worse still, the logging was subsidised by the government. Stopping the logging of native forests therefore will potentially mean more funds for predator control, not less.

The 'log the forests to save them' position is another version of the 'multiple use' philosophy that has been used to justify mining, logging and grazing of wilderness areas and National Parks. Unlogged old-growth forests are, in Jerry's words, 'dying trees'. By implication, logging is euthanasia for forests.

The argument that 'if we don't log the forests, timber will come from somewhere with worse standards' is equally thin. Timberlands' PR firm Shandwick used this argument while simultaneously working for the Malaysian Timber Council defending the logging of tropical rainforests.

World Wildlife Fund temporarily supported the scheme after being courted by Timberlands as part of a strategy to undermine the efforts of the New Zealand environment movement. It was a trap WWF fell for, to their subsequent regret.

Bob Burton
O'Connor, ACT

Wild Jim

Firstly my thanks to you and your staff for providing a comprehensive and enjoyable magazine for so many years.

On a recent trip in the Blue Mountains from Kanangra to the Megalong valley my



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two fellow walkers and I had an encounter unique in my 20 years of outdoors activities and I feel compelled to share it with others as a warning that road rage has a wilderness equivalent.

My two walking mates and I had walked to Mobbs Swamp... While one of my mates and I gathered water the other went to locate a nice camp-site among the casuarinas. He settled on an obvious site delineated by four logs surrounding a fireplace with some firewood already present—not an unusual occurrence in my experience... We subsequently spotted three packs hidden behind a fallen tree over 35 metres away.

Not long after, three walkers approached and what a surprise we got. We were set upon verbally by one named Jim whose first greeting was 'We didn't collect that firewood for you pack of bastards to burn!' For a moment we thought he was joking but it soon became clear that humour was not his forte and every swear-word under the sun emanated from his mouth as he continued his tirade. We pleaded our innocence, offered to move camp-sites, offered to gather more wood but to no avail. The abuse continued...

Jim stormed off in a direction that made no sense to me till I realised he was looking for his pack and in his anger could not locate it till directed by his associates. With his pack on his back he once again approached us and I offered my hand and name to him in friendship only to be asked 'What makes you think I'd want to f***** know your name, you arse-hole?' With that the group went and camped 100 metres away. Our early departure the next morning had us pass by their camp and we were acknowledged by both other chaps but not Jim...

So, be warned: If you are going to be in wild country and particularly the Wild Dog Mountains, look out for 'Wild Jim'. He may have marked his territory in a manner known only to him and woe betide anyone entering it.

Graeme Carrad
Mount Riverview, NSW

Get real!

While I found the article by David Neilson on Patagonia (*Wild no 76*) interesting, I was astonished to find that this was based on an expedition conducted in 1978—the disparaging comments about Argentinians may have been relevant/understandable 23 years ago but are irrelevant today!... Times have changed—perhaps *Wild* should do the same. Get real!

Geoff Holloway
(by email)

The article simply reported what happened at the time. Editor

The good life

I would like to say thank you for all the pleasure that has come from being a reader/subscriber with *Wild* since issue one.

Wild has truly been a remarkable, inspirational and ethical publishing institution within Australia.

This is not something I wish to take for granted or fail to acknowledge to myself and all of you.

Wild has been part of a good life in a great land...

With thanks.

Paul Toon
Graceville East, Qld

Independent stand

...I have subscribed to *Wild* for a few years, and part of my renewal is to support your 'green' effort. I thoroughly believe that someone who puts their views on the line, and I agree with them, deserves my support. So while your support for environmental issues may have lost you some subscribers (who wants them, anyway) I am sure it has gained some for you, too. Also, as I believe in your editorial independence, I take your gear surveys seriously and base my choices on these combined with the salespersons' advice... The long and the short of it is that your magazine attracts business to your advertisers due to *Wild*'s independent stand.

Keep up the good work.

Chris Macfarlane
(by email)

One up on sun-up

Enclosed [*but not published*. Editor] is what we believe to be one of the first photos taken from mainland Australia of the new millennium sunrise.

The commonly held belief is that the sun's first rays hit Mt Warning, which is near the continent's most eastern point at Cape Byron in New South Wales. While this may be the case for some times during the year, our research with national mapping authorities surprisingly revealed that on 1 January the sunrise at Cape Howe in Victoria is nine minutes earlier than at Cape Byron. So much for the thousands of revellers who travelled to Byron Bay to be the first to see the Y2K sunrise!

We took the photo from the top of Howe Hill, looking east over Cape Howe. The Howe Hill sunrise was at 4.39 am, three minutes earlier than Cape Howe due to its 398 metre elevation, making it the first sunrise on mainland Australia.

We're still wondering why we were the only two people there. Didn't anyone else know? Did everyone else prefer to party in less solitary places? Perhaps they were put off by the challenge of the four-hour trek through unmarked scrub to the top of the hill? Whatever the reason, we certainly thought it was an appropriate and significant way to start the new millennium.

Adam and Hermann Ritzinger
St Andrews, Vic

Readers' letters are welcome (with sender's full name and address for verification). A selection will be published in this column. Letters of less than 200 words are more likely to be printed. Write to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.

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The passing of a pioneer

A tribute to Alex Trahair, by *Lachlan Drummond*

Alex Trahair, one of the early walkers in the Victorian Alps, died at the age of 93 on 18 January. He was a friend and compatriot of the pioneers including Bill Waters, Bob Croll, the Bryce family of Wonnangatta Station, the Frys and others famous in the Alps.

Trahair belonged to the Melbourne Walking Club (MWC) for many years and would often venture into the bush with fellow members. In 1926 he and fellow MWC member Bill Waters

became the first Europeans to cross the Barry Mountains. Water is particularly hard to find on the 'Dry Barries' and each night the walkers were forced to descend into gullies carrying their bilbies in search of water; sometimes they had to go thirsty. The crossing was completed on New Year's Eve 1926.

Trahair crossed the mountains and rivers from Mt Cobbler to Lake Tali Karng dozens of times. His most regular trip into the bush would take him from Merrijig near Mansfield to Dargo. The route took in Mt Buller, Mt Howitt, the Wonnangatta Homestead—and always a visit to his friend Harry Smith of 'Eaglevale'. Smith was a well-known High Country personality who had lived alone on the Wonnangatta River, south of Wonnangatta Station, for decades. In 1917 Smith discovered the body of one of the victims of the infamous Wonnangatta Station double murder and helped police with their investigations. The murders were never solved. However, Smith, who died in 1947 (reputedly aged 99), was thought to have known who the murderers were and to have confided their identities to Trahair.

Bob Croll, a long-time president of the MWC, used Trahair's photos of the bush extensively in his classic book, *The Open Road in Victoria*,

published in 1928. Other references to Trahair can be found in early editions of *The Melbourne Walker*, in Wallace Mortimer's books, *The History of Wonnangatta Station* and *Wonnangatta Station—the Next 25 Years*, and in *Wild* nos 31 and 70.

It was always a delight to hear Trahair speak with such love and knowledge of the mountains. His favourite drink was whisky with Howqua River water. With Trahair's passing the Victorian bush has lost a long-standing friend.

Her lure, and your reward, is liberty, health, and a memory in whose halls are hung imperishable pictures past the skill of man to paint. Everywhere they towered, Magdala and the Square Gin Face, Tamboritha, Wellington, Kent and the Snowy Bluff, and as we slowly rose to the heights, the land fell away on either side to depths of wonder.

Robert Henderson Croll,
Along The Track, 1930

Lachlan Drummond has walked extensively throughout Australia including in the Victorian Alps. He worked in outdoors retail for a number of years before working at *Wild* for three-and-a-half years. His favourite thing is to watch the sunset over the Australian bush. Drummond was a friend of Trahair.

Alex Trahair, who died at the age of 93 in January, was one of the early walkers in the Victorian Alps. Scott Drummond



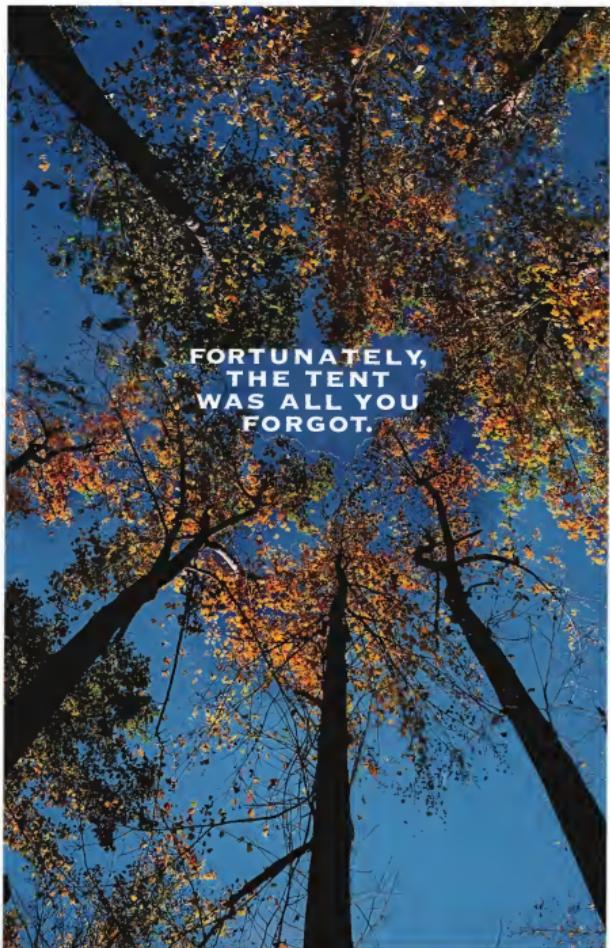
White-water stadium opens

A new venue for white-water boating is now available! The Penrith Whitewater Stadium—which has been built to host the Sydney Olympics slalom event—has recently been completed and is open to all. The course is made up of a dozen or so grade-2 and grade-3 rapids jam-packed into a fast-flowing circuit. The beginner can be reassured by the open, grassy banks and the hordes of onlookers; the rodeo groover can strut his or her stuff in various holes; the Duracell-type paddler who just keeps going and going can enjoy the conveyor belt joining beginning and end. Penrith is an hour west of Sydney and the Whitewater Stadium is well signposted. The course is open for recreational boating every weekend at a cost of \$20 a day. It's well worth the trip if you have the time but beware of the rafts!

Jenny Johnson



Competitors in the World Cup canoe slalom final at the new white-water Olympic slalom site in Penrith, near Sydney, in September 1999. The white-water stadium is open for recreational boating every weekend. John Wilde



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Oz success at World Rogaine Champs

Although held in mostly open farmland, mist blanketed the higher parts of the course for the fourth World Rogaining Championships, in Canterbury, New Zealand, on 15–16 January. This resulted in some very challenging navigation even in daylight and kept the temperature down. The steepness of the terrain reduced the choice of routes somewhat and led to many teams selecting similar 'chains' of controls.

Rogaining is the sport of long-distance cross-country navigation; the world championships are held over a 24-hour time limit.



Australian David Rowlands (left) and Greg Barbour from New Zealand won the Open Men's title at the World Rogaining Championships in Canterbury, New Zealand, in January. Grant Jeffrey

After coming second at the last world champs in Canada, Greg Barbour (New Zealand) and David Rowlands (Australia) won the Open Men's title. With a score of 2410 out of 3000 points they were comfortably ahead of Chris Forre (New Zealand) and Nick Barrable (UK) who, amazingly, met only the day before the event! Jason Markham (New Zealand) and Dieter Wolf (Switzerland) were in third place. Wolf was the 1999 World Masters Orienteering Champion, and has an extensive orienteering and mountain marathon background although he had never taken part in a rogaine before.

Defending world champion Nigel Aylott from Melbourne teamed with the current Australian champions to finish a disappointing sixth. Renowned endurance athlete John Jacoby from Victoria finished seventh.

The defending Open Women's world champions, Canadians Catherine Hagen and Pam James, were beaten into second



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Crossing the divide

Quentin Chester muses on walking, walkers, poetry and the bush

Only strangers, the very poor and the dead walk in the bush.

Les A Murray

I NEARLY CHOKED ON MY SCROGGIN WHEN

I first read this many years ago. I might be a lowly, urban intellectual but I can tell when a smarty-pants from the country is taking a swing at bushwalkers. Still, Les is a big-time balladeer. Some people reckon that he's our Poet Laureate. Unofficially, of course—this is Australia after all!

Anyway, seeing that he's our Versace of verse, a home-grown honcho of the haiku, I got to wondering whether maybe Les had a point. Perhaps he doesn't bump into anyone he knows when he goes for a stroll. It's also true that a lot of walkers look a bit hard up. You know, the daggy clothes and scungy beards. (The kind of bode who could really use some of the nine grand that Les scored for helping to draft a constitutional preamble for which no one voted.) As for the bit about dead people—I'm not sure. Perhaps he means ghosts. Then again, a lot of walkers staggering up hills do look dead on their feet.

So, yeah, for a moment or two I gave Les the benefit of the doubt. But I was all confused again by the time I'd read his second sentence: 'Of the living, no one who belongs to the bush walks any further in it than they can help.'

'Belongs' is the killer punch. If bushwalking is all about hoofing it a lot further than you actually need to, quite a lot of us don't belong out there! It's about toddling along just for the hell of it. An indulgence that does nothing to put a roof over your head or food on the table—a bit like reading poetry.

Still reeling from the possibility that I didn't 'belong', I kept reading until Les's third paragraph, where he lets rip with this doozy: 'Walking is only really stylish amongst fairly privileged urban people; bushwalkers are just a shade below joggers and squash players, and may be coterminous with them.'

Cripes!

So, according to Les, we who go walking are city types who enjoy physical activity and play unfashionable racket sports. Included in our number are strangers and stiffs, people who are poor and others who are rich. Leaves the field wide open, wouldn't you say?

teams and dairy farmers go about their honest toil. It's wonderful, sepia-hued writing. Given what follows, his opening remarks seem peripheral, like an old cattle dog scent-marking his territory.

But don't judge Les too harshly. He's just a ratbag, an old-fashioned stirrer. The sort of bloke who's always got a beady eye out looking for the grain so he can go against it. You might recall all that hullabaloo a couple of years ago when he added his two bob's worth to the claims that Manning Clark was a closet Commie. In recent times Les has stuck up for that Demidenko bird (remember her?) and had a crack at defending poor Pauline. So I guess that we can take what Les says with a grain of salt.

But that leaves us with a question: Who does walk in the bush? Well, by my reckoning just about anybody. In my travels I've met everyone from plumbers and preachers to painters, pastoralists and pedagogues. Speak to park rangers or anybody who's spent a few years working behind the counter in a bushwalking shop and pretty soon you'll realise that there's no telling who's going to stroll through the door next. We perambulators are a very diverse bunch indeed.

My own definition of walking is rather open-ended. I know that some aficionados look down their noses at anyone who hasn't climbed Federation Peak in late July while wearing a blindfold. But not I. To me, a walker is just anybody who enjoys putting one foot in front of the other: beachcombers, couples walking their dog in a local park, kids down the creek after school, old biddies out for a stroll and farmers who enjoy checking their fences. The main criterion is not how far or how hard you walk, but a willingness to find satisfaction in being a pedestrian.

By my definition Mr Murray is as much a bushwalker as anyone I know. His essay also includes lengthy descriptions of places where he has enjoyed 'solitary rambles', places where he can 'be quiet among the birds and trees'. He details a kind of sound-



We perambulators are a very diverse bunch indeed...a walker is just anybody who enjoys putting one foot in front of the other: beachcombers, couples walking (or carrying!) their dog...kids down the creek after school, old biddies out for a stroll and farmers who enjoy checking their fences. Geoff Beveridge

Les's dig at bushwalkers comes from one of his longer raves, *In a Working Forest*. The bulk of the essay is a recollection of the district where he lives and its history. Like a rural Sandy Stone, Les rabbots on about forested valleys where timber cutters, bullock

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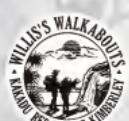
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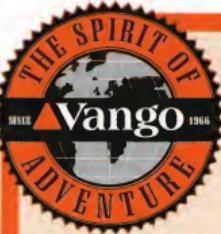
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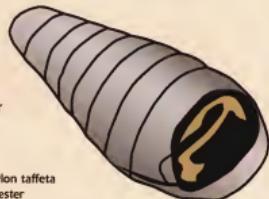
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less visual symphony' where the trees change with altitude and soil type. It's rhapsodic stuff to which any walker would warm.

According to my definition, walking is probably our most popular non-horizontal pastime. As you read this, many thousands of people all over this wide, brown land are taking their leave of the suburbs. Some are weaving their way along tracks or standing with maps in hand atop breezy lookouts. Others are huddled around stoves and curled up snoozing in their domes away from home. They belong to a great, unnamed tribe of nomads.

The odd thing is that for a such a popular pastime, walking gets hardly any coverage in the papers or on TV. As an activity, it seems to be outside the loop of what is trumpeted as being important and 'now'. I'm not exactly sure why. But, I guess, it

And such is the force of these wild encounters—incidents with the power to inspire and rejuv lives—that they become almost the only kind of truth you feel comfortable to accept. Walking trains its disciples to look sideways with a sceptical eye. You learn that so many of the things we are urged to regard as important—technological breakthroughs! never-to-be-repeated offers!—are really not worth giving a toss about.

All of which probably explains why it has taken me so long to respond to Les taking pot-shots at bushwalkers. Compared with the triumph of going for a walk, who cares whether a poet wants to throw his weight around? And yet, the opening to *In a Working Forest* kept nagging away. Then, on a sunny, late-spring afternoon a couple of years ago, I got my chance to take a different sort

The funny thing through all this is just how much the poems address the sensations of being on foot, sidling along a creek or looking skyward to a leafy canopy. He says a lot to which readers of *Wild* can respond intuitively. So do we need to reconcile the majesty of the poems with the more irritable pronouncements of their creator? Perhaps a bit, but when all else fails, trust the poems.

In so many ways poetry is like a bushwalk. It's a step into the unknown, an act of discovery. For Les this was a very big step to take. As a country boy, raised on a dairy farm, a workaday job invoking the muse is

'In so many ways poetry is like a bushwalk. It's a step into the unknown, an act of discovery.'

doesn't fit in. It's much too old-fashioned and low-tech. Let's face it, the corporate cowboys are not going to chase the rights to something slow and non-competitive, in which the only skill required is one most of us master before our second birthday. You can almost hear their lament: how can we make money out of an activity that's freely available to any old fart with a map, a sunhat and a smelly pair of sand-shoes?

All of which makes walking disgustingly democratic. Apart from occasionally forking out a bit of dosh for camping permits and the like, the whole show is pretty much free. There aren't any governing bodies or bumptious officials. Everyone is eligible. Forget about annual fees, service charges or sponsors' logos. In this way walking exists as a separate reality, a bit like farming or religion. The promise it holds is not just being among the birds and trees but escaping a world that seems barking mad.

Walking releases you from the onus of being up to speed with consumer choices. The bush offers little scope to those with a lifestyle fetish. Instead, there are hills to climb and a hard stuff known as ground on which to sleep. At home we struggle with so much information, all sorts of slippery half-truths and non-core promises. There is dubious news and tricky advertising producing us to buy things we will never need with money we don't have.

In contrast to this cling-wrapped version of events, the simple act of taking a walk in the bush gives you unprocessed reality. Walking is 'in your face'. You see things with your own eyes. You know that the track is long because of the sweat on your back. When you happen upon something astonishing there isn't a voice-over commentary. Instead, you make of it what you will. You own the experience.

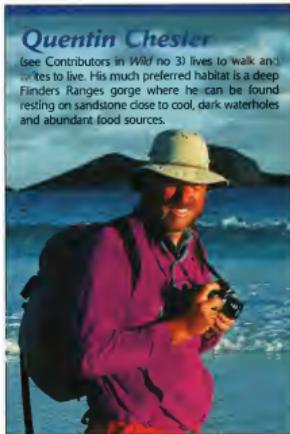
of walk, one to Sydney's Museum of Contemporary Art to listen to the great man himself.

Les Murray is famously large. Not unlike Hoss from Bonanza—a Hoss who has swallowed several dictionaries. A big man with big ideas and big opinions. In the flesh he's rapid, delivering thoughts with a smile and a panting, quivering laugh that immediately disarms the listener. Even when what he says seems a bit skew-whiff such is his wizardry with words you've just got to marvel at the deft touch.

Les gave a public reading from *Subhuman Redneck Poems* and his most recent collection, *Conscious and Verbal*. He read swiftly, a little too swiftly at times to gather together all the words but the drift of feeling was there. After two intense hours I was more than ready to forgive him his slurs against weekend wanderers.

In many ways Les is to poetry what Fred Williams was to painting. A phenomenally gifted one-of-a-kind. A lot of people imagine that Fred was a nature lover, in the romantic mould. In fact, his passion was to do things with paint. It just happened that visions of the Australian landscape provided him with congenial subject matter. Murray is similar. He has written a lot about the bush, is eerily intimate with its voices and shadings, yet he is first and foremost a poet.

Like Fred, Les has a gift for getting under the skin of things. He makes us see the familiar in a startling new light and unfurls images for earthly things most of us overlook. Reading his poems there is a shock of recognition. You find yourself saying 'Yes, that's how it is!' It's not worth dismembering the poems to extract a quote but have a look at *The Gum Forest, Bent Water in the Tasmanian Highlands, The Grassfire Stanzas or Dead Trees in the Dam* to see what I mean.



Quentin Chester

(see Contributors in *Wild* no 3) lives to walk and to live. His much preferred habitat is a deep Flinders Ranges gorge where he can be found resting on sandstone close to cool, dark waterholes and abundant food sources.

to be on the end of a long limb. It seems that part of the price for Les's feeling of separateness is a need to take up a battle position. It's not enough to know that townies are different—we have to be adversaries as well.

All of us occasionally look for the lines that divide rather than the ties that bind. For a boda who felt so keenly the pain of exclusion as the butt of school-yard gibes in his own early life, Les can be remarkably unaccommodating in his judgment of others. Yet, despite the aggro, his poetry lives as an incredible exercise in bridge building. We don't always have to agree with the bloke but to meet him on common ground is certainly worth while.

At the end of *In a Working Forest* Les writes about the 'quality' of the bush and the 'curious remote decency' with which anyone who walks regularly will connect:

As you move and work there, or as you die there, you do so in an intense spare abundance which sheds its perfumes and its high riddled light on you equally...away from the marks of human incursion, it is always the first day. One in which you are as much at home as a hovering native bee, or the wind, or death, or shaded trickling water. 

Quentin Chester

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An advertisement for Icebreaker Nature Clothing. The top half features a person in a dark, hooded jacket standing in a snowy, mountainous landscape. The word 'icebreaker' is written in a stylized font at the top left, with 'NATURE CLOTHING' underneath. The bottom half contains text: 'ICEBREAKER WINTER 2000 IN STORE NOW' in large, bold, white letters. At the bottom right is a logo for 'NEW ZEALAND MERINO' with a stylized 'M' icon.



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TASMANIAN BUSHWALKING

Frenchmans Cap

A Wild feature on this Tasmanian icon





Walkers in front of the jagged, white quartzite of the South-east Face of 'the Cap' (1446 metres). By the 1920s the first recreational walkers were finding the peak an irresistible magnet despite fickle weather and a difficult approach.

Grant Dixon

Journeys to the Ivory Tower

Simon Kleinig follows in the footsteps of the pioneers

...Once through the gates of Macquarie Harbour, the convict, chained on the deck of the inward-bound vessel, sees in front of him the bald cone of the Frenchman's Cap, piercing the moist air at a height of five thousand feet...

MARCUS CLARKE, IN HIS AUSTRALIAN classic, *For the Term of his Natural Life*, may have been a little generous...Frenchmans Cap's height is 4744 feet (1446 metres). More importantly though, Clarke underlines the historical significance to Tasmania of this remarkable peak. After Hobart's Mt Wellington, it's difficult to imagine a mountain which

'...the curtain of fog rolled up...and just across the valley the gleaming white mass of the Frenchman towered above our heads.'

has featured more prominently in the State's history.

From the earliest times, Frenchmans Cap was visible to ships plying the rugged west coast of Tasmania. Desperate convicts, exchanging the hell of Macquarie Harbour for another in the form of dense forests, used the mountain as a guiding beacon in their attempts to reach the settled districts further east. By the time the first exploring party pushed west in 1832, it was already a well-known landmark. Even Sir John and Lady Jane Franklin passed close by the Cap on their adventurous journey west in 1842. By the turn of the century, the lure of gold and mineral wealth had already drawn prospectors into the area. And by the 1920s the first recreational walkers were finding the peak an irresistible magnet despite fickle weather and a difficult approach.

Apart from historical considerations, Frenchmans Cap ranks high on the list of Tasmania's most striking peaks on an island blessed with a plethora of scenic delights. My introduction to the region took place on a wet November afternoon as we stoically trudged across the Loddon Plains, heavy mist obscuring all the views we had been anxiously anticipating. The next day we stumbled breathlessly to the top of Barron

Pass on one of those perfect spring mornings which often follow days of stormy weather in the highlands. I was quite unprepared for the sight of that elegant shaft of white quartzite thrusting skyward just across the valley from where we stood in awe, so close that I felt I could almost touch it. That first glimpse of the peak still remains a treasured memory of times spent in wild places.

Loddon Plains were drying out as we pushed on for Lake Vera at a steady pace. It occurred to me how much we take for granted the difficulties the first journeymen to this region must have endured. Chris Binks, in *Explorers of Western Tasmania*, gives a detailed insight into the journeys undertaken by these men. Unlike mainland Australia, history does not reveal any Burke-and-Wills-style epics, just



The North Col and Frenchman's Cap viewed from the Lions Head. The route to the summit climbs the scree slopes to the col, then ascends a series of terraces to the final slopes, which lead to the imposing summit cairn. Simon Kleinig

Charles Whitham, a visitor to the region in 1915, offers this colourful description:

...I must say something about the Frenchman, most striking and mysterious of all Tasmanian mountains...no matter where you see him from, he dominates the landscape...I have seen him in dark purple velvet, and half an hour afterwards, under the sunshine, in virgin white. He is set as a dome on many branching buttresses...while at the foot of the great precipice are Lakes Cecily, Gertrude, Magdalen and Millicent...if one could spend a night on the knees of the mountain, beside those quiet lakes, and watch the moon gradually light up the regal symmetry of the marble heights, the scene would form a vision of sublimity to remain in the mind for evermore...

We chose early January for our most recent trip to the Cap and were rewarded with days of glorious sunshine. Even the notorious

determined men pushing through a difficult environment mile by mile, valley by valley, during an amazing 65 years of constant exploration. The dense scrub, wet rainforest and mountain barriers of western Tasmania frequently combined to restrict the results of entire expeditions to the sole addition of a mountain or a river to the map.

The Mitchell Library holds the journal of one of these explorers, the surveyor William Sharland, and it makes fascinating reading. Leaving Bothwell in February 1832, with instructions to find a route west as far as Frenchmans Cap, Sharland was the first to penetrate this mysterious wilderness, shown on maps of that time with the daunting appellation 'Transylvania'. Just south of present Derwent Bridge, Sharland and two men set out for the Cap and, after two difficult crossings of the Franklin River, camped on the flats below Mt Mullens near some old Aboriginal huts.

The 350 metre high, overhanging East Face—a remnant from when the area was covered in ice. This is undoubtedly one of Australia's most impressive cliffs. Dixon



In the days before Gore-Tex, fibrepile and ergonomically designed rucksacks, Sharland's party struggled with heavy, military-style knapsacks, topped with a blanketed roll and dangling billets. A blanket tent, open at both ends, provided little shelter, while their meals were based around flour, bacon, cured meat, salt, biscuits, tea and sugar. To supplement this frugal diet, wild honey was sometimes

covered a heap of bones...probably the remains of those unfortunate wretches who have absconded from Macquarie Harbour to seek this melancholy termination of their existence.

Crossing the Loddon River, Sharland climbed on to Pickaxe Ridge. He would have seen the long backbone of the ridge from Mt Mullens, winding its way up to Frenchmans

Cap. The party spent a stormy night camped near 'a very large pond of water' (Lake Vera). Despite a blustery and showery night, they awoke to a fine, cool morning and an optimistic Sharland surveyed the high, heathy ridge to the west of Lake Vera which leads up to the Main Range:

When the sun rose, the clouds dispersed, though still hanging on top of the Cap. We started with high expectations of ascending the Cap in about two hours at furthest... After eight hours of incredible fatigue without a single halt, by dint of winding our knapsacks and guns up precipices and the most hazardous climbing ourselves, where one slip would have hurled us some hundreds of feet into a chasm below, we reached the long expected height (Sharland's Peak).

To Sharland, the heavily forested valley below provided a seemingly insurmountable barrier, so they marked out 'W S' in rocks, fired a double shot at the Cap, probably both in salute and frustration, and retraced their inward route. It is unfortunate that Sharland did not find the connecting ridge just below where he stood and go on to make the first ascent. That honour remains clouded in doubt although the first recorded ascent was made by surveyor James Sprent's party, which built the first trigonometrical station on the summit on 16 January 1853. Nevertheless, Sharland's expedition was a commendable achievement in route finding at a first attempt, and a vital contribution to further exploration west.

By late afternoon we had arrived at Vera Hut; the dry crossing of the Loddon Plains had spared us the usual task of washing

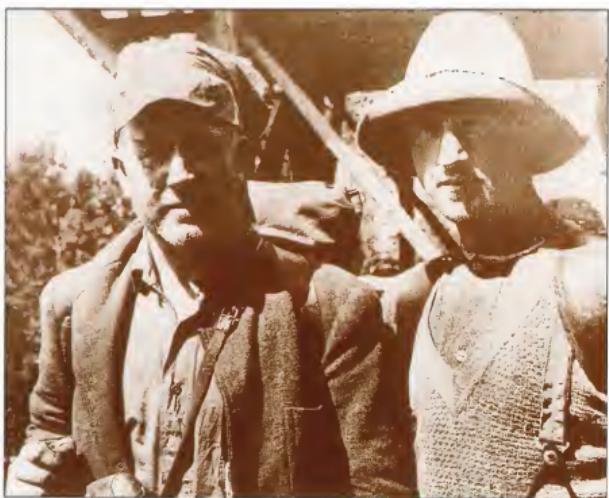


Fred Smithies, left, and Ronald Pitt gaze at the Frenchmans Cap Range from the northern end of Pickaxe Ridge, February 1928. Although the pair failed to reach the summit that year, Smithies returned with Cliff Bradshaw in March 1931 and made a successful ascent. Smithies collection

collected and hunting dogs ensured a valuable supply of fresh game. These early bushmen wore thick woollen clothing with mole-skin trousers and leggings, often fashioned from animal skins while on the move, and sheltered themselves from the weather as best they could with heavy oilskin capes. In addition, they were further burdened with muskets for protection against Aborigines and, on this trip, the very real threat of escaping convicts.

Sharland then struggled through wet scrub to the top of Mt Mullens:

A most beautiful valley extended SW below us (the Loddon Plains). The whole ground had been burnt, apparently before the late snow and, I conclude, by the natives. In this valley, I dis-



Smithies, left, and Bradshaw. The photograph was taken in March 1932 after the pair had successfully traversed South-west Tasmania's Eldon Range. Smithies collection

boots and gaiters in Vera Creek. The next morning we picked our way round the rain-forested shore of Lake Vera under perfectly blue skies and toiled up the slopes towards Barron Pass. In March 1934 an intrepid party of Hobart Walking Club members, Evelyn Emmett, Jack Thwaites and Des Giblin, came in from the east. Thwaites describes their approach to the Cap:

...a long buttongrass finger leads west right into the heavily-timbered foothills...just after crossing the South Loddon there is an old weather-beaten charred board nailed to a solitary tree.—Frenchmans Cap, 1910, J E Philp.

The party then followed Philps Lead, named after J E Philp, who first cut the track to Frenchmans Cap from the east between January and March 1910. In *Tasmania by Road and Track* Emmett continues with his narrative of the journey, including an enthusiastic description of their climb to Barron Pass:

We descended...to the shores of a sheet of water known to the dozen or so people who have seen it as Lake Vera. The next day's journey will live in my memory forever and a day. In my time I have traversed countless hundreds of forests, but never such a forest as this upon the slopes that are the outliers of the Frenchman Range. Mounting all the time, even our heavy burdens could not dull our rapture in the kaleidoscope of scenes in that vale of no

travellers. Beeches, tree-ferns and fifty other species beautified our breathless way...behind the forest towered sheer white cliffs dripping their eternal shower bath upon the puny mortals who had sweated and puffed their way towards the Pass... Then round a rocky spur, across a basin of 'wild artichoke', through another smaller pass, and Lake Tahune is the welcome sight, for it means rest again. A day-long, slogging journey, and we had covered three miles!

The Archives Office of Tasmania holds Fred Smithies's written accounts of his attempts to reach Frenchmans Cap, the yellowing pages revealing much of the enthusiasm and character of the man and his steadfast resolve to reach his objective. In February 1928 Smithies and Ronald Pitt made an approach from the east along Pickaxe Ridge and camped in the forested depths of the valley below Sharlands Peak. The next day they laboured for six hours, pushing up the other side to the top of the range, only to be turned away by bad weather and 'an apparently impassable gulf'. Smithies philosophically reflects on the attempt:

...We failed in the ultimate object of our trip. But a trip, I think, can hardly be regarded as a failure if, for a single instant, it provides a thrill that goes to the depths of one's very soul...

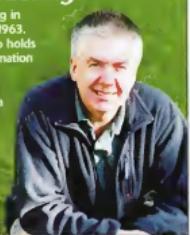
In March 1931 Smithies's persistence was rewarded. He enlisted the services of Cliff Bradshaw, a local woodcutter who had

roamed the ranges east of Queenstown in search of King Billy and Huon pine and who was an experienced bushman. This time they approached Frenchmans Cap from the west, initially across button grass and heavy timber country following a track originally cut by explorer TB Moore but soon almost obliterated by dense bauera, tea-tree and cutting grass. After crossing the Franklin heavy rain set in and continued for a couple of days. Climbing up from the Franklin gorge, the pair nearly abandoned the attempt because of persistent weather:

...we were actually on the point of beating a retreat, when, as if staged for purpose, the curtain of fog rolled up, and the glorious sunny day we had been hoping for burst upon us, and just across the valley the gleaming white mass of the Frenchman towered above our heads. Anything more dramatic it would be difficult to conceive, as that wonderful view unrolled before us and the object of our desires revealed himself in all his beauty to our fascinated gaze.

Simon Kleinig

has been walking in Tasmania since 1963. Frenchmans Cap holds a particular fascination for him and at present he is researching for a proposed book on the history of the region. He lives in Adelaide.



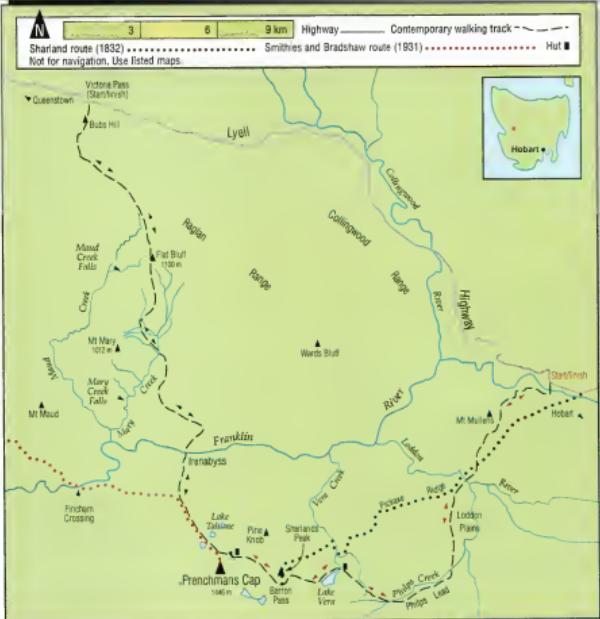
Food rationing had left Smithies and Bradshaw with a meagre breakfast of 'half a tin of sheep's tongues and a small piece of bread' to sustain them:

...With heart thudding from sheer exhaustion and weakness, it was only by resting every few minutes that one was able to stagger on to the pinnacle. Arrived there, however, the wonder of the scene was sufficient to banish all thought of weariness or hunger... Standing on the very summit, on the edge of a precipice with a sheer drop of 2,000 feet, we looked down on to a group of lakes at the bottom of gorges far below... The panoramic view simply took one's breath away.

When we arrived at Lake Tahune we found that the hut had recently undergone welcome improvements as had the hut at Lake Vera. It had been a warm walk from Barron Pass, so we took an invigorating swim in the inviting but perpetually cold waters of Lake Tahune. The scenery surrounding Tahune Hut is unsurpassed, as Emmett observed from their camp-site above the lake:

I cannot describe Lake Tahune adequately. The immediate surroundings of this sepa pool are pines, and right out of it for a sheer couple of thousand feet rise the white cliffs of

Frenchmans Cap



Frenchmans Cap. Away to the north as far as vision will reach are mountains, Barn Bluff being about the most distant of those that can be recognised.

Following a meal, we set out for the summit. As we climbed higher, the whole range was washed in long afternoon shadows and the soft light of dusk. At 7.30 pm we stood on the summit in balmy summer perfection, gazing down on Barron Pass, its spires lit up by the long rays of a setting sun. In twilight we made our way down to Tahune Hut.

The next morning we decided to explore more of the region and we chose to have a closer look at the Franklin gorge. We set off early for a return day-trip to the Irenabyss, a spectacular, narrow, rock-walled gorge lying beneath the shadow of Frenchmans Cap. The sunny weather continued, and for the whole day we took in wonderful, expansive views out across Lions Head Ridge to an endless sea of green mountain-range wilderness and the encircling gorge of the Franklin.

After another cold swim and lunch at the Irenabyss, we returned weary though thoroughly rewarded to Tahune Hut. The present hut replaces the split-pine original destroyed by a bushfire in 1966. Frenchmans Cap National Park was declared in 1941 after strong cases were put forward by early, influential walkers. Soon after, the Scenery Preservation Board approached Bradshaw to construct a hut at Lake Tahune. In 1946 he began work on the hut with his son Bernie, aged 16. Bernie told me about building the hut:

We came in across the Loddon Plains. At that time the track hadn't been used in donkey's years. We set off carrying a six-foot cross-cut saw...it cut everyone to pieces carrying that through the scrub...we put it in the scrub and left it. We went in there and found a tree, felled it and split the palings. I was given the job of blocking the tree off with a handsaw. I didn't mind, I was young and able. We built the hut over a couple of months—the weather governed it—I think it may have been three or four trips. We were chased out with weather a couple of times. I remember one time we saw three inches of snow in ten minutes...snowflakes were coming down like dinner plates. The bushfire burnt the hut in the finish. It was quite a good hut, actually. It'd be a welcome shelter to people. The palings fitted up pretty well and it was a reasonable size.

The next day we returned to Vera Hut. The following morning was overcast with light rain, but by the time we reached the Loddon Plains it had opened up to another fine day. The mud had dried to such an extent that it was cracking and at times we walked over a perfectly hard surface with the strange sensation of the whole mass wobbling beneath like some enormous jelly. Late in the afternoon we climbed out through the Franklin Hills, looking back at what Smithies had described as the 'White Mountain which beckons from afar'. And we felt that maybe just a little of the spirit of those pioneer walkers accompanied us. ☺

Back Door to the Franklin

...and a little-known waterfall en route, by Bob Brown



'We parked our day packs on a midstream boulder and after a ten-minute clamber up the bed of the swiftly flowing stream reached the top falls.' Bob Brown relaxing in the sunshine at Mary Creek Falls on the last day of 1998.

Paul Thomas

I FIRST GLIMPSED THE MARY CREEK FALLS from a helicopter during a rescue operation in the Franklin River floods of 1980. With Paul Thomas, I finally set out to visit them two days after Christmas in 1998. Tasmania was awash. The Boxing Day rains had been perfect for waterfalls but I found the climb from the Lyell Highway at Victoria Pass, up Bubs Hill and then on to the back of the Raglan Range in mist and rain a serious test after months without exercise.

Halfway up the range I extracted one leech from my right boot and 12 from my left. It was a good excuse for a stop. The slope was ablaze with big red Christmas bells and the promise of better things to come.

Most of the Raglan Range was included in Tasmania's Franklin-Lower Gordon Wild Rivers National Park and Wilderness World Heritage Area in 1982. The north-west re-

mainder was added when the Greens won the balance of power in Tasmania in 1989.

The whole range and its outliers and, across the Franklin River, the Frenchmans Cap massif had been burnt by fires from logging operations in earlier times. Some of the grandest King Billy pine forests, centuries old, were burnt to a cinder and no one was brought to account. Except for a tiny patch or two, these forests have failed to regenerate.

We joined the abandoned track atop the range in heavy mist, camped for the night in the headwaters of a creek and, with the skies clearing the next morning, walked to the Maud Creek Falls. These tumble off a quartz ledge north of Mt Mary into a rainforest where the deep green foliage of a huge, lone King Billy pine dominates the canopy.

The pines are not regenerating but the pandannis are. Myriads of these tough, green,

single-stemmed plants jostle for places along Maud Creek. In December they are decked with flowers like clumps of raspberries among their pineapple-top foliage.

We moved on over the alpine plateau of Flat Bluff, through acres of ankle-high garden with flowers everywhere: pink-fringed paper daisies, green cushion plants, white geums and red sunflowers. In a niche on the south side of the plateau is a clump of deciduous beech, young King Billy pines and native cheshunt pines. Mary Creek springs from this grotto and after just a few hundred metres tumbles down a deep cut in the southern cliffs of Flat Bluff to the Mary Creek Plain below.

We climbed down off the bluff and camped. Where the creek exits from the plain is the floor of a wide basin surrounded by mountains.

Frenchmans Cap (1446 metres), Australia's most majestic mountain, dominates the south-

gully fringed by cliffs, we hit the creek at a beautiful rock bend in blissful sunshine. We parked our day packs on a midstream boulder and after a ten-minute clamber up the bed of the swiftly flowing stream reached the top falls. Mary Creek springs from under a huge boulder and drops 20 metres to a plunge pool. On all sides is cliff and on the west is a pocket of rainforest, which was lit by the late morning sun. For most of the year these south-facing falls would be in continuous shade. For us, ten days after the summer solstice, the falls danced and sparkled in the midday sun.

Back downstream, where our picnic rock was perched atop the boulder strewn second falls, we hung on to some shaky stems above the cliffs to get a glimpse of the rim of the third falls, 50 metres further down the canyon. The difficulties of approaching the third and fourth drops, together with the sheer satisfaction with what we had already seen,

17 years. I had almost forgotten how stunning it is to look straight down, from the quartz crags 120 metres above, to the bottom of the chasm where the dark waters of the Franklin flow another 20 metres deep. The Irenabyss (which means 'peace chasm') is always decked by a meandering pattern of white foam from the rapids in the gorge upstream. From the crags it takes ten minutes, down a steep track, to be beside the Franklin where the river widens out after it leaves the Irenabyss.

We spent three easy hours by the river in the rainforest patch where rafting parties often camp. One Huon pine, a metre and a half thick and possibly two thousand years old, graces this patch. We swam the achingly cold river and sat like monkeys on the smooth, sunny rock bank looking up into the Irenabyss. Since I first rafted into this grand little chasm with Paul Smith in 1976 and floated down between the smooth rock walls listening to the 'plink' of water droplets, I have not been there on such a quiet, perfect day.

Thousands of rafters have been down the Franklin and through the Irenabyss now, and the immaculate state of the riverside camp-sites is a credit to them and to the tour companies. From the river there isn't any evidence of their impact.

Having crossed the Franklin at this point, it is a good idea to head up over Frenchmans Cap (an 1100 metre climb, mind you) and back out to the Lyell Highway over the Loddon Plains. That is a two-to-four day hike.



Mary Creek Plain, the Irenabyss Ridge (middle, left), and the majestic Frenchmans Cap from Flat Bluff. Bob Brown

ern skyline. Mt Mary (1012 metres) stands over the west of the plain separating Mary and Maud Creeks and a long, continuous ridge from Flat Bluff (1100 metres) to the Irenabyss enfolds the plain on the east.

The next morning a large, fat wallaby hopped away as we emerged from the tent into two more days of rain and lowering cloud. A platypus splashed in the creek.

On the fifth day the chorus of birds at dawn was followed by sunshine. Paul and I struck out across the south-east flank of Mt Mary for the three kilometre hike to the Mary Creek Falls. In fact, there are four falls. I have not seen any accounts of them and we didn't have a route guide. By using the Collingwood and Darwin 1:25 000 Tasmap sheets we picked the right ridge. After a glimpse from a nearby outcrop and a tough bush bash 100 metres down a very steep

led us to decide (after a quick dip in a safe side-pool) to climb out up the easier ridge and back to camp.

Two hours after leaving the falls canyon we reached the hilltop overlooking our tent as the shadow of Mt Mary began to fall across Mary Creek Plain. Paul spied our two friends Graham Green and Neil Cremona, dots in the middle of the plain, walking in to join us. We cooed greetings. They beat us to the camp and were made extra welcome when they produced a bottle of wine and a piece of fruit cake to celebrate New Year's Eve.

The next morning we set off at eight, up and along the Irenabyss Ridge, arriving above the Irenabyss three hours later. I have rafted through this beautiful, rock-walled gorge seven or eight times and walked to it twice before. However, this was my first visit in

Bob Brown

was captivated by Tasmania as soon as he stepped ashore in 1972. He stayed to become a thylacine hunter, GP, politician, and a fighter for Tasmania's and the world's wilderness. Tasmania's magnificent wild forests and wilderness remain his recreation, and to protect them is his preoccupation.



We backtracked to our camp and the next day hauled out over Flat Bluff and the Raglan Range to the highway. After a dip in the Collingwood River and a beer at a Derwent Bridge hotel we headed for home in Hobart.

Where else in the world can you set out for a week and not see another soul at the height of the summer tourist season? Our biggest shock came when, back at the car, we found the keys stolen. We had hidden them beneath a blackwood ten metres away. After a brief search we discovered them in their plastic bag behind a clump of button grass. The bag had been chewed to bits! A fury bush rat had extracted its fee for our visit into this little-known part of wild Tasmania.

The track today

Visit Frenchmans Cap, and the Franklin River as well!

By John Chapman

THE TOWERING, WHITE QUARTZITE ROCK of Frenchmans Cap is one of the most visible landforms on the west coast of Tasmania. A major feature is the huge, overhanging East Face—this is a remnant from when the area was covered in ice.

While the peak dominates the scene, the rocky spires surrounding the mountain are just as spectacular. The access route goes through Barron Pass, which has wonderful views of the rugged terrain.

The route to the peak is along a well-used track. At times it is too well trodden with very deep mud on the Loddon Plains. In recent years a lot of track repair work has been done and the delicate alpine areas have been attended to first. These areas can take generations to recover and were considered highest priority. The muddy plains nicknamed the 'Sodden Loddon' will grow over very quickly once the track has hardened.

When to go

The best time is summer from December to March. For experienced walkers, this peak can be visited in any season and winter visits are quite common with local walkers.

Safety

The track is well defined and easy to follow. There is plenty of deep mud on the approach. The climb to the summit crosses rocks and scree and requires some caution in wet or windy conditions. Normal wet-weather equipment such as a tent and windproof/waterproof clothing is required. Most of the approach track is in the trees and has some shelter.

Maps

The *Frenchmans Cap* 1:50 000 Tasmap is excellent. It covers all the tracks to the peak. If heading out north from the Irenabys over Mt Mary, you will also need the *Franklin* 1:100 000 Tasmap or the *Collingwood* and *Owen* 1:25 000 Tasmap sheets.

Further reading

Detailed track notes are available in several books. *South West Tasmania* by John Chapman, *Bushwalking in Australia* by John & Monica Chapman and *100 Walks in Tasmania* by Tyrone Thomas are the best known.

Permits

Entry fees apply to all National Parks in Tasmania. For individuals, the \$12 Backpacker



Lions Head Ridge from the summit track. During a day-trip to the Irenabys, Simon Kleinig's party '...took in wonderful, expansive views out across Lions Head Ridge to an endless sea of green mountain-range wilderness'. Kleinig

Pass provides entry to all parks for two months. For local walkers with a vehicle, the \$40 annual pass to all parks is the best-value entry permit. At present permits are not required for bushwalking, just for entry. Camp-fires are banned; take a fuel stove.

Access

The 'Cap', as it's locally known, is between Queenstown and Derwent Bridge. The Lyell Highway passes close by and this is serviced by regular bus lines on most days. At present Tasmanian Wilderness Travel (phone 1031 6272 7300) has bus services four days a week between Hobart and Queenstown.

From Hobart follow the Lyell Highway north-west for 173 kilometres to Derwent Bridge. Continue west for a further 30 kilometres to the signposted start of the track. From Queenstown follow the highway east for 53 kilometres to the start of the track.

The walk

From the highway follow the track downhill into the thick forest beside the Franklin River. Cross the river on the suspension bridge; a short, steep climb up boardered steps leads on to a scrubby ridge. The track heads west for 1.5 kilometres to cross a side-creek. This is a scrub-down station for *Phytophthora* funghi. Scrub boots and gaiters carefully. The track continues through mixed scrub and light forest, climbing south into rainforest on the side of Mt Mullen.

The top of this small range is covered in thick vegetation. There is an excellent view of Frenchmans Cap as you begin to descend on the western side—this is a popular stop. A steady descent then leads south-west down the valley of a minor creek to the forested plains beside the Loddon River. Good camping is available on both sides of the river.

Cross the river on the large suspension bridge and follow the track 50 metres upstream along the river-bank. To the left you will see a series of logs in the river; this was the original, difficult river crossing.

The track heads south along the Loddon Plains. It is clearly defined and extremely muddy. Many would not call this a track with long stretches of mud which is usually knee-deep. Two arduous kilometres of mud lead to a major creek, then another kilometre of even deeper mud heads to Philips Creek. This has good camp-sites.

Past the creek the track swings south-west and heads up the button-grass valley of Philips Lead for two kilometres. While the track is still muddy, the base is stony and the mud no longer seems bottomless

like on the Loddon Plains. At the end of the lead the now drier track enters scrubby forest and crosses Philips Creek again.

The track continues west, climbing through scrub into a delightful, open rainforest. Soon after, it enters a broad saddle, then descends briefly to the open valley of Rumney Creek. Follow the boards and repaired track north-west across the top of this valley into another small saddle, then descend through scrub to the timbered boardwalk that leads to Vera Hut. If the hut is full, there are some campsites in forest on the northern side of the creek.

the walk AT A GLANCE

Grade	Medium
Length	Two to five days
Type	Glacial mountain scenery
Region	Western Tasmania
Best time	Summer
Special points	Spectacular glacial scenery, lakes, rainforest, very deep mud

Day two

From the hut follow the timbered track crossing the outlet creek of the lake. The track enters thick forest and sidles along the steep, northern side of Lake Vera to its western end. A small, very wet camping flat is here. The track leaves the lake and enters rainforest. Initially follows a creek. The walking is generally easy but some steep, short climbs are hidden in the forest. The most difficult step has a very slippery, timbered stairway bypassing it.

Once you have left the creek, the track heads directly up towards the cliffs of Sharlands Peak then sidles west towards Barron Pass. A massive boulder blocks the track at one point. This is from a landslide in the 1970s. The track passes underneath this and a short scramble leads back on to the original track. Soon after you will reach Barron Pass, which provides wonderful views. Jagged rock spires tower above the pass on both sides; to the west is a series of lakes. Towering above it all is the overhanging East Face of Frenchmans Cap.

From the pass the track descends briefly into scrubby forest, then sidles north-west traversing rocky slopes under Sharlands Peak. This leads to a ridge, then to a saddle known as Artichoke Valley. The track skirts this small flat and climbs on to another ridge near Pine

Knob. Cross the rocky slopes to the west and, with the aid of timber stairways, descend the track to the hut at Lake Tahune.

If the weather is fine, climb Frenchmans Cap during the afternoon. Without packs, follow the steep track heading west to the North Col. From the saddle, the track heads south to the cliffs, then swings left and climbs a rocky slot through the cliff. From there the track follows a zigzag series of terraces avoiding cliff-lines to the summit cairn. The view from the top is excellent. Do not scramble down the steep slope on the east side as the cliff-edge is dangerous. Follow the track back to Lake Tahune.

Day three

This is an all-day side-trip to the Irenabyss. From Lake Tahune follow the summit track back to the North Col. Turn right and follow a foot track north-west under the crest of the Lions Head. This leads on to the main, open ridge which is readily followed north-west for three kilometres. At a band of low cliffs the track leaves the main ridge and swings north heading directly towards the junction of Tahune Creek and the Franklin River. Some track work has been done here to reduce erosion and timber steps lead down to Tahune Creek. The Franklin River with the entrance to the Irenabyss is a few metres to the left.

The Irenabyss is a deep, narrow gorge on the Franklin and cannot be visited on foot. However, it can be explored with a rubber raft or Lilo. The current in the gorge is negligible and the water is both cold and very deep. From the Irenabyss it is possible to follow some rough pads north over Mt Mary to the highway. While different, the scenery is not as interesting as returning along the track to Tahune Hut and then back along the main track to the highway.

Return to Lake Tahune by the route taken earlier after exploring the area.

Day four

From Lake Tahune follow the inward track back out to Lake Vera and the Loddon River. Camp on either side of the river. If you have private transport, it is possible to continue to the road on the same day.

Day five

This is an easy morning's walk. Follow the track to Mt Mullen. Enjoy a last view of the Cap before descending to the Franklin River and making the final, short climb to the road to meet the bus service. 

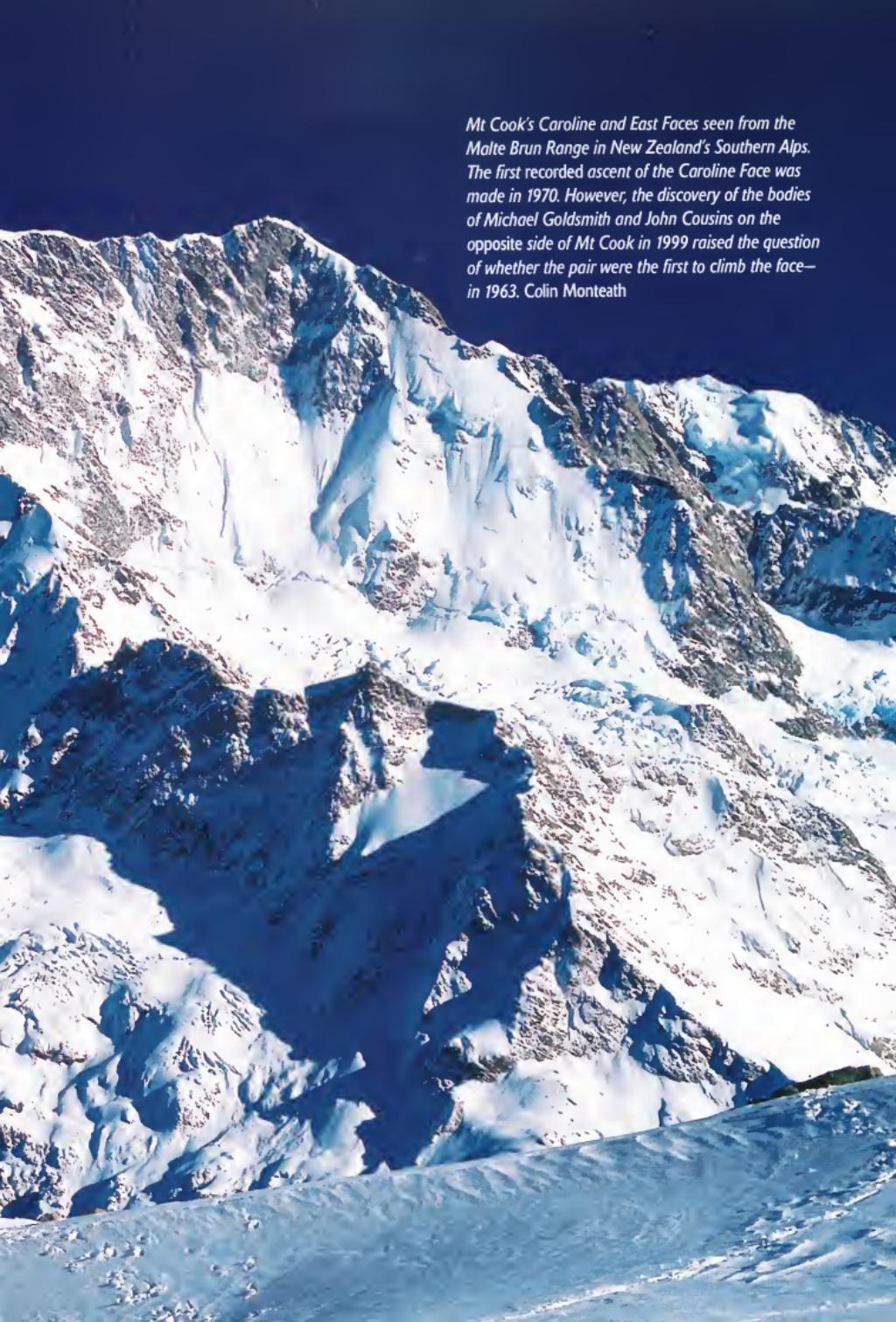
A Mountain Speaks

The recent discovery of two bodies has raised the possibility that Mt Cook's 'last great problem' was climbed seven years before its celebrated 'first ascent'. *Andrew Lindblade investigates*



John Cousins, left, and Michael Goldsmith, right, 'were well on the way to climbing better than they ever had before. Both were known for their keenness in the mountains and, importantly, their ability to undertake a climb such as the 2000 metre plus Caroline Face.'
Liz Cousins collection and Timaru Herald, respectively





Mt Cook's Caroline and East Faces seen from the Malte Brun Range in New Zealand's Southern Alps. The first recorded ascent of the Caroline Face was made in 1970. However, the discovery of the bodies of Michael Goldsmith and John Cousins on the opposite side of Mt Cook in 1999 raised the question of whether the pair were the first to climb the face—in 1963. Colin Monteath

ON SATURDAY 16 OCTOBER 1999 TWO climbers, Mike Brown and Kent Needham, were descending the Hooker Glacier of Mt Cook on the South Island of New Zealand when they discovered some human remains and climbing equipment. Brown and Needham had been climbing in the upper Hooker area, based at Empress Hut. After making the difficult decision earlier that day to turn back late in a climb due to poor conditions, the pair decided to walk out to Mt Cook Village.

They were walking alongside the eastern moraine wall of the Hooker Glacier, slightly north of Hooker Hut, when they came across the remains. It was 2 pm and the sun was shining brightly, radiating off the glacier surface.

'The first thing I noticed was an orange helmet that was crushed on one side,' remarked Brown. 'I was very calm about the whole matter partly because I was tired and also because it was something I'd come to expect to find in the mountains at some time. Then we noticed what looked like an upper torso. Body parts were scattered over a 20 metre radius, dismembered, beyond identification, and exposed to the sun,' he added. Had Brown and Needham been walking only 20 or 50 metres further away, the bodies may never have been discovered. The bodies were identified as Michael Goldsmith and John Cousins.



This Litica Paxette camera, which was found with the remains, became 'the source of much hope for answering one of the biggest questions in New Zealand's mountaineering history'. Timaru Police

Brown and Needham also found a camera, which was soon to become the source of much hope for answering one of the biggest questions in New Zealand's mountaineering history.

What is so important about this discovery? It raises the question of whether Goldsmith (22) and Cousins (25) made the first ascent of one of the last great prizes in New Zealand mountaineering, the Caroline Face of Mt Cook, back in 1963. This would have preceded the first recorded ascent by some seven years.

Goldsmith and Cousins were both students at Canterbury University in Christchurch, and about to complete their final exams. They were well on the way to climbing better than they had ever had before. Both were known for their keenness in the mountains and, importantly, their ability to undertake a climb such as the 2000 metre plus Caroline Face. They had the respect of

'We were away on holidays at the time they (Michael and John) went missing,' she recalled. 'We didn't even know they were at Mt Cook until we heard of their disappearance.' The family had only recently moved to Timaru when Dorothy's husband, the Reverend Charles Goldsmith, was inducted as the vicar for St Mary's Church. I noticed a portrait of Michael on the wall, wind-brushed hair, hands on rock, a smiling face. Part of me recognised that smile, of feeling the sun and the rock and climbing higher. 'Michael wanted to be the first to climb the Caroline Face. He was a very quiet boy, he just went off and did things', Dorothy said softly.

Liz Cousins, John's sister, remembers her brother as quiet and slightly mischievous, and also as someone who was devoted to climbing. 'But he didn't talk about his climbing much, especially to mum, as he knew she wasn't so keen on it,' Liz explained to me recently. 'He was living in Christchurch at the time, and the family was in Wellington, so we didn't really see him that much, or hear about his adventures in the mountains, but we al-



Michael Goldsmith's stepmother Dorothy holding a leather mountaineering boot found with the remains. Andrew Lindblade



The climbing helmet was the first thing sighted by Mike Brown and Kent Needham. 'Cousins' was scratched inside and this identified the remains. Also pictured are the remarkably intact guidebook and the wooden handle of an ice-axe. Lindblade

their peers, and it is apparent that an attempt on the Caroline wasn't regarded as stupid given their experience at the time.

After hearing about the discovery of Goldsmith and Cousins, I arranged to talk with Dorothy Goldsmith, Michael's stepmother. We met at the Goldsmith home in Timaru, south-west of Christchurch, on a cool November evening. I somehow nervously canvassed the subject, trying to talk about something that, as Dorothy poignantly said, 'was a long time ago'. Trying to bridge the gap between then and now wasn't easy.

ways knew he was up to something,' she continued. The memories of her brother came easily, and she spoke with obvious relief, perhaps happiness, that he had finally been found. [The 90-year-old mother of John and Liz Cousins died the day before her long-lost son's body was found on Mt Cook.]

Dorothy and I kept talking about the mountains and climbing for a while, about others gone missing in the mountains, about the sadness of never knowing. The afternoon faded into the overcast Timaru

evening. When I somewhat stupidly asked why she thought that Michael went climbing, Dorothy looked at me quizzically for a moment and replied: 'Well, it's a great adventure really, isn't it? She meant it in a profound sense; of willingly climbing into danger, of being unsure of the outcome.

Then she asked whether I would like to see the equipment found with the bodies. We walked outside, retrieved two boxes from a shed and carefully sifted through the gear. As Dorothy said, 'it's as if it was only lost and found yesterday'. I pulled a Mt Cook guidebook from the box and rested it on the smooth, dry garden path. Its edges were soft and worn, showing the effects of once having been wet from snow and ice, barely

two aluminium-stepped étriers (used by climbers to stand high in the steps while weighting protection they have placed, commonly referred to as 'aid climbing'), corroded ice-screws and karabiners, a helmet, a leather boot and 12-point crampons, an ice-axe with a wooden handle, and a rope. I looked back at the aluminium steps of the étriers and was amazed at how fresh and un-tarnished by time they seemed.

The pair would have taken the étriers to tackle vertical seracs (ice-cliffs) lining the face, in particular the infamous line of cliffs across the middle of the face. Only the corkscrew-type ice-screws (as opposed to the tubular screws used today) and karabiners hadn't escaped the weathering effects of

discovered their remains nearly 36 years later *on the opposite side* of Mt Cook. A scratched 'Cousins' inside the helmet was the source of identification. This simple fact made everyone concerned realise that to have ended up on the Hooker Glacier the pair must have crossed the summit ridge of Mt Cook.

Their intentions and the equipment they carried implied an attempt on the Caroline Face. It is possible that they were climbing 'lightweight'—apparently they left their sleeping bags at Ball Hut, and a relatively small amount of equipment was found with the bodies. However, more gear could well not have been found. The lack of sleeping-bags may suggest that they either intended to keep climbing up the face and over the summit ridge in one push, or that they would stop somewhere during the relative warmth of daylight to sleep.

It is possible that they only intended to make a reconnaissance of the face but after closer inspection believed that they could climb fast enough (even if that meant having a night out somewhere without any bivouac gear) to manage without sleeping-bags. It is interesting that a stove was not found with the bodies; a stove is essential to melt snow for water on a long climb where a couple of litres each won't last long enough. In any case, it is obvious that they believed in their ability and commitment sufficiently to really go for it.

The only other possible option for ascending Mt Cook from the eastern side, based on their Ball Glacier approach, was by the East Face. But this, to me, seems doubtful as the pair would have needed to change their plans very soon after leaving Ball Hut so as to approach the East Face with any degree of safety and efficiency. This, in effect, would have meant leaving the Ball Glacier very early to allow for the

Climbers 50 hours Overdue On Avalanche-prone Face Weather Prevents Search

Two Canterbury University students at 9 o'clock last night were more than 50 hours overdue from a planned reconnaissance of the Caroline face of Mt Cook.

The men who left the Ball Hut at 12.20 a.m. on Friday to climb the avalanche-prone sheer rock face, and did not return late

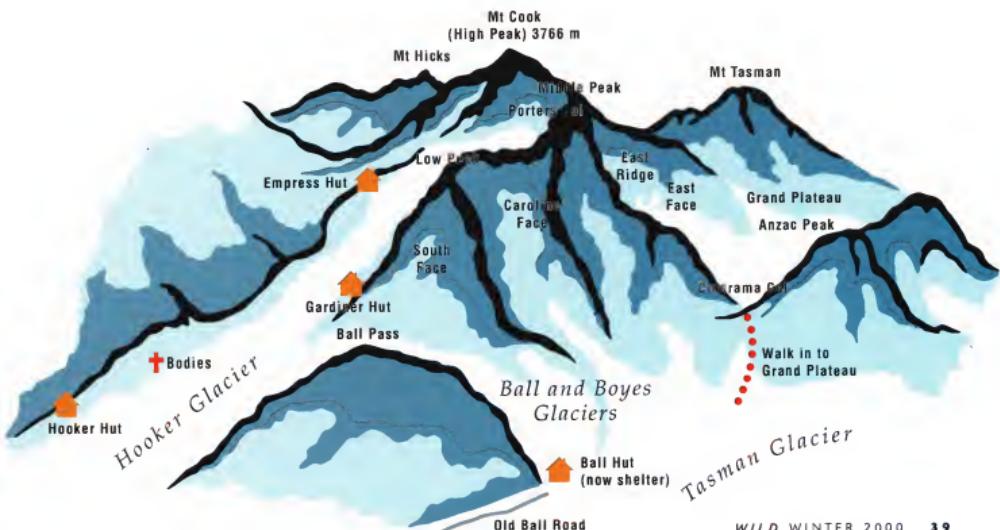
6 November 1963
The Timaru Herald

touched since Michael and John had last read from it. It was like opening a time capsule, slightly invasive; like finding someone's personal belongings. Yet here was something that spoke directly to me—and no doubt to others of the alpine world.

Dorothy brought out the map that had been found and I placed it next to the guidebook to photograph them. We also inspected

the 36-year wait on the glacier. They appeared heavily corroded, even flaking with the metal having oxidised.

At 12.20 am on Friday 1 November 1963 Goldsmith and Cousins left Ball Hut on the northern end of the eastern terraces of the Tasman Glacier to begin their attempt on the Caroline Face. It was a clear night, and promised a fine day. Brown and Needham



approach to Cinerama Col and the East Face (a standard approach route to the Grand Plateau/East Face of Mt Cook). Remember, we believe that *it was their intention* to go to the Caroline Face.

However, according to Peter Gough, who made the first *recorded* ascent of the Caroline Face with John Glasgow in 1970, 'during the snow conditions in 1963 there was an "escape" route from the foot of the Caroline out to the East Ridge'. This could have been used by Goldsmith and Cousins if they decided against attempting the Caroline after inspecting it at close range.

How fast Goldsmith and Cousins may have climbed, and where they spent Friday and Saturday nights before the onset of the bad weather, is speculative. Gough said in a recent report in the *Timaru Herald* of his and Glasgow's ascent: 'there was always the fear of the unknown, that we would get towards the top and just find something we could not do... the reality is technically it is not that hard, it was just a long way. If things go wrong you (were) on your own.'

After a midnight departure from Ball Hut, Gough and Glasgow reached 'the shelf at mid-height' on the face at 11 am. Here they rested and slept until 3 am the following morning, preferring to climb through the coldest part of the night when snow and ice conditions were least prone to avalanche. This was their main reason for staying so long at this point. After leaving their bivouac they climbed the major ice-cliff, reaching Porters Col at 5 pm. From here they descended to Gardiner Hut by the North-west Couloir, a popular descent route from the Low Peak of Mt Cook.

When Goldsmith and Cousins failed to return to the Hermitage Hotel on the Sunday afternoon (3 November), the alarm was raised. Fears escalated due to the rapidly deteriorating weather on Sunday. It had remained fine until then, which encouraged hopes that the pair may have climbed the face and were sheltering in Empress or Gardiner Huts—then not equipped with radios. It is interesting that despite this hope no one searched far up the Hooker Glacier, apparently held back by the weather, and by the hope that the two were lying up in a hut. According to a report in the *Timaru Herald* at the time, these 'hut hopes' were held by 'experienced mountaineers waiting at the Hermitage to go out on a search, thus giving some credibility to the theory that Goldsmith and Cousins had made it over Cook's summit ridge and down to Empress or Gardiner Huts.'

On Monday 4 November the manager of the Hermitage, LS Dennis, said: 'It (the Caroline) is an extremely dangerous area which has always been avoided because of the avalanche hazards. However, it has come into prominence in recent times, probably because it is the last challenge in the region... It is assumed from the message left by the two that they had decided to attempt the first climb.'

Because fine weather had prevailed until Sunday, Burke and others did not have any real reason to suspect that the two were

missing—unless, of course, they had met with an accident. But on Monday, Burke and other rangers went to Ball Hut in poor weather conditions—heavy wind, low visibility, and snowfall—to look for Goldsmith and Cousins, but found nothing. So fierce was the weather that they were forced to stay in Ball Hut most of the time. 'Visibility was nil, and the wind was so strong that it picked up small pebbles,' Dennis said.

A ski-plane made a brief search on Sunday but had to return due to the onset of the bad weather. All search aircraft were then grounded. Radio contact with a hut-building party camping on the Grand Plateau (now the site of Plateau Hut, these days a six-ten hour walk, requiring good mountaineering skills, from Ball Hut) told of extremely poor conditions, with heavy snowfall. One contemporary newspaper report told that ten feet (three metres) of new snow had fallen on the Grand Plateau by 6 November. Any possibility of a search

area. Bits of gear were scattered around a 20 metre radius... I guess we were quite lucky in some respects, that at least now the families have an answer.'

The location of the found remains has given an insight to where the two men may have perished. Bellinger believes that the bodies probably travelled up to eight kilometres from the point of death due to glacial movement. 'We believe that puts them on Porters Col on the upper Empress Glacier somewhere, maybe descending', said Bellinger in a report in the *Timaru Herald* on 20 October 1999.

In my opinion, Porters Col is the route to descend if one wanted to lose height as

Words of warning

One-hundred-and-eighty-seven people have died in the Mt Cook National Park (MCNP). Forty of these people are still missing. On average, three people die every year in the park. The Mt Cook area is a vast, geologically violent place. It is easy to treat it with insufficient respect. Be aware of your limits by knowing what you're getting into on a route or mountain. Don't hesitate to use a guide if you're unsure about a route (for example, the Copland Pass, where it is easy for experienced walkers/beginner mountaineers to think 'it'll be right'). Understand the weather. Take notice of forecasts—they are usually accurate.

Department of Conservation staff are remarkably helpful, so be efficient on the radios, and use the sign in/out system—it is there for your benefit. Look out for others in the mountains.

Rescues are very costly, and the New Zealand taxpayer foots the bill. There are about 50 helicopter rescues a year in the MCNP, and the police exceed their budget every year.

Source: New Zealand Police

party going up on to the Caroline Face was ruled out as far too dangerous. A ranger sortie up towards the lower reaches of the Caroline Face reported 'continuous avalanches'. The search was abandoned on Sunday 10 November 1963 on the basis that 'all areas of probability had been covered'.

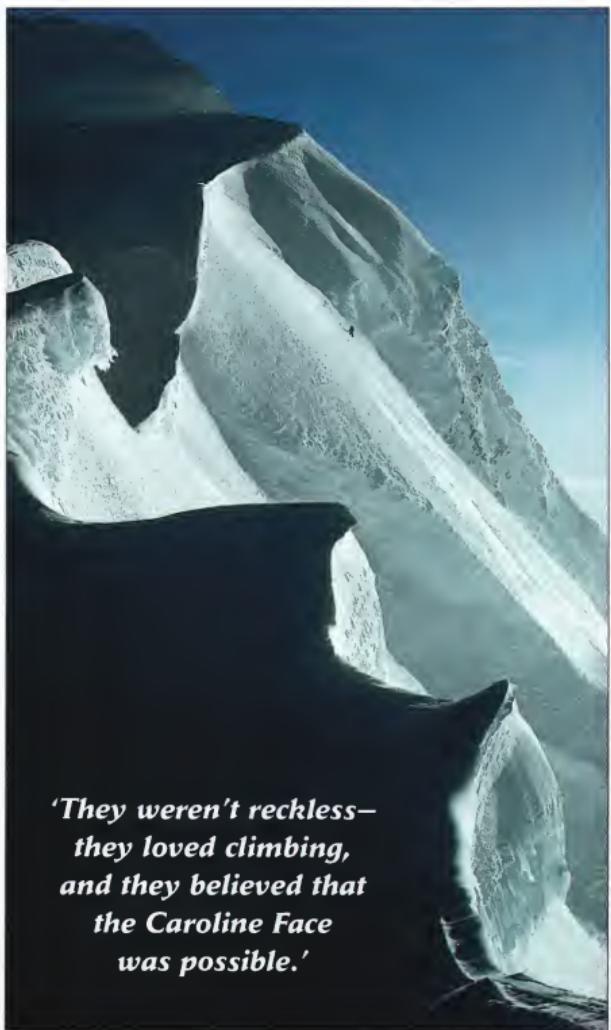
When Brown and Needham notified the Department of Conservation (DOC) of their discovery upon arriving at Mt Cook Village, a recovery helicopter flight was organised to retrieve the body remains and equipment. On that flight were Brown, DOC Officer Ray Bellinger and Constable Mike Stephens from Twizel police station. Constable Stephens remarked to me when we talked in Twizel last November: 'It was just amazing for the bodies to be found in such a huge



The remnants included, from left to right, the old-style corkscrew-type ice-screw, a karabiner, and an ice piton—crucial tools for scaling the infamous mid-height ice-cliffs on the Caroline Face. Lindblade

quickly as possible in stormy conditions (that is, if one were at or near Porters Col, one wouldn't go out to the Low Peak to descend the North-west Couloir). From this col, several hundred metres of 40° front-point descending (and some abseiling, depending on conditions) lead to the flat upper Empress Shelf/Glacier from which it is possible to reach either Empress or Gardiner Huts quite quickly in clear weather provided the party is familiar with the routes.

However, given the scale of the Caroline Face, and the likelihood of the pair being tired and dehydrated, it may be that they were caught by the arrival of the storm while still high on Mt Cook; even while still on the Caroline. In a tired and mind-numbed state, hypothermia would have taken hold very quickly. The difference between fighting bad weather when fresh, well-fed and hydrated and being in the opposite state is frightening. It is very likely that the pair would have sought shelter in a bergschrund



***'They weren't reckless—
they loved climbing,
and they believed that
the Caroline Face
was possible.'***

A solo climber approaching the top of Mt Cook's Caroline Face. Nick Groves

or crevasse below Porters Col, but this, sad to say, is probably where they lost their fight. Had they climbed the East Ridge (either by Gough's suggested 'escape' route of 1963, or by the early Cinerama Col approach described earlier), they would have emerged at the Middle Peak of Mt Cook, from which Porters Col can be reached within 15 minutes.

Inspector Dave Gaskin of the New Zealand Police informed me that according to Dr Doug Lamont, the Timaru pathologist who examined the bodies, the remains indicated that at least one of the men

suffered a considerable fall. While much damage to the bodies was no doubt caused by 36 years of glacial movement, Inspector Gaskin said, 'there were fractures to the leg and also the spine, which could not be made by just glacial movement, and had to have been made by a fall'. If these injuries had been sustained before the pair died, it is virtually impossible to know where—they may have occurred very high on the Caroline Face. But they would certainly have caused the men to move much more slowly while trying to descend or seek shelter.

As speculation about the possible first ascent grew, attention began to focus, to wait on, the outcome of the attempt to develop the film in the camera that had been found. Aware of the sensitivity of a camera and film that had been lying and moving on the Hooker Glacier for 36 years, the New Zealand Police sent the camera to Imagepac, a specialist photo laboratory in Auckland, which in turn sent the camera to UK photographic company Ilford, which manufactured the film. Both Goldsmith and Cousins were keen amateur photographers and the camera, a Littica Paxette, is thought to have been a good one for the time.

'A photograph from above the major ice-cliff looking at (Mt) Sefton in the background or looking at the East Ridge with Malte Brun in the background would be definite proof of an ascent', Gough told me.

However, Imagepac has informed me that no results have been retrieved from the damaged film. Disappointment has also been conveyed by the New Zealand Police. 'The labs in England have expressed dismay at the poor quality of the film', Inspector Gaskin told me.

It now seems as though we shall never know whether Michael Goldsmith and John

Andrew Lindblade

is currently on an expedition with Athol Whimp to attempt the first ascent of the North Face of Jannu (7710 metres), in the Nepalese Himalaya. His book is due for release later this year.

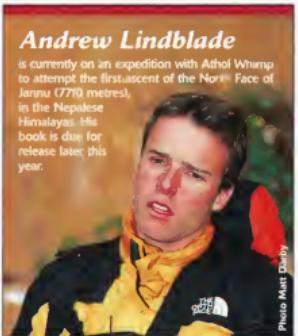


Photo: Matt Derby

Cousins made the first ascent of the Caroline Face. The film was the last possible source of proof. Certainly most people to whom I have talked agree with the likelihood that the pair made the first ascent. And my opinion? For what it's worth, I think that they did it. But that is only informed speculation. We should be wary of myth-making. Upon reflection on the whole issue, Gough is remarkably relaxed about the find: 'it is so long ago and life has moved on; neither John (Glasgow) nor I really mind if it can be shown they did make the first ascent.'

While it may be relatively pointless to analyse what may have really happened to these two young mountaineers in their final hours, it does give us a special insight into their vision; into their big commitment. They were part of a generation of alpinists who stood in awe of 'the Caroline'. They weren't reckless—they loved climbing, and they believed that it was possible. And in this belief lies real freedom.

Mt Howitt and Beyond

Judy Kelly visits a dozen classic peaks in the Victorian Alps

AFTER PASSING THE SILVER THREAD OF THE
Dandongdale Falls in the shadows of dusk,
we reached Cobbler Lake in the Victorian Alps.
Several campers ambled over to interrogate
us, their reactions a mixture of envy, wonder
and 'glad it's not me carrying a heavy pack'.

Our Mansfield taxi driver left, promising to
pick us up in six days from the Bluff car park.
He'd warned us that summer had been pretty
dry and that lack of water might be a problem.

We found a sheltered spot for our party of
four: Christine and Craig from Sydney and



Walkers stop to rest and admire the view of the Razor (pictured directly above the figure) from a narrow rocky ridge just below the summit of Mt Cobbler. Glenn van der Kruiff



Dave and I from Canberra. There wasn't much time to drink in the sunset colours reflected in the tranquil lake because of the need to pitch camp ahead of the rapidly encroaching dark. Unfortunately, even bushwalkers face deadlines.

After a comfortable night, punctuated initially with the haunting sounds of a boobook owl, we set off the next morning, crossing a clear, strongly flowing creek which was to be one of the few such creeks we saw. We then climbed through snow gums to Mt Cobbler. Their subtle, silvery-grey markings

to 15 Year 9 students from a Melbourne girls' school whose bush skills were being assessed for an award.

The evening set in damply with mist which didn't encourage us to linger over our curried chicken. Christine, who is normally immune to the cold, remarked that she was glad we

bands visible along one side, forest clinging to the other.

It was hot. The reddish rock reflected heat and midday had become a drowsy shimmer as we ate lunch and gazed at the Viking with its prominent cliffline three-quarters of the way up.

'...distance teased the eyes. The length of the Crosscut Saw seemed to increase rather than decrease as we walked.'

matched the overcast sky that brooded sulently as we negotiated the cracks and clefts in Mt Cobbler's rocky head.

From the top we could see one of Cobbler's ramparts jutting out in the foreground with mountain ranges brooding darkly under the clouds towards the Barry Mountains and Mt Feathertop to the east and Mt Buffalo to the north-east. Northwards, bleached pasture contrasted with the blue alpine ranges.

The view suggested variety and challenge in an area not very familiar to me. Like many parts of Australia, including the Snowies and the Blue Mountains, this part of the Victorian Alps had been opened up by gold prospectors as well as cattlemen and their families in the mid-1800s.

In his popular book *Wonnangatta Moroka National Park*, John Siseman explains how local cattlemen provided hospitality and acted as guides in the unmapped mountains during the early 1900s. As walking became more popular, they worked in with the Victorian Railways's Skyline Tours in the 1920s and 1930s to supply provisions and horses.

The Victorian Alps have a reputation of having been tamed to a greater extent than their counterparts in New South Wales but I was hoping not to see too much evidence of that. A chilly wind edged us off Cobbler, down its forested flanks and along a fire track.

After lunch we continued through forest and open country, leaving the track to climb the clear slopes of Mt Koonika, a sly, steepish pitch which punctuated the end of the day.

We camped in a grassy hollow near Camp Creek, below Mt Speculation, and collected water from a pipe underneath a track culvert.

The area was large enough to accommodate a cluster of dome tents belonging



The climb up Mt Buggery is short but steep with spectacular views of the narrow, undulating ridge of the Crosscut Saw (pictured in the background). The track to Mt Howitt traverses this ridge, which has sides dropping precipitously to the Howqua and Wonnangatta River catchments. van der Knijff

hadn't scheduled the walk any later than March. A flurry of tiny, icy pellets sabotaged any further discussions about the weather.

Sun lured us out of our tents the next morning for a day walk to the Razor, which is *en route* to the Viking. Fierce names, these. We walked through moderate scrub and snow gums, dropping steeply to Catherine Saddle, then over Mt Despair.

Route finding demanded concentration, especially when we hit a scrubby cleft or saddle which entailed bush bashing and sidling along a conglomerate slope before we emerged on to the Razor with its rock platform and a profile to fit its name.

The actual end-point of the Razor tilts sharply like the prow of a sinking ship, rock

True to its name, the Viking looked challenging and uncompromising. The surroundings also reflected a certain harshness: if the trees had been lower and more mallee-like we could easily have been out west.

Christine was energetically focusing her thoughts on continuing the walk to the Viking. The prominent, deep saddle between us and the Viking looked dry. Three hours there and back?

Because Christine's proposal didn't attract enough takers we ploughed back into the cleft, which provided a slight navigational challenge with its head-high tea-tree and scrub. Out came the compass and map and Craig, our chief navigator, pointed us in the right direction.

Craig relied partly on the map and compass and on memories of a walk in the area 25 years ago. At times we also followed the Australian Alps Walking Track, which appeared at erratic intervals as did its signs.

Before we set off the next day we filled our water-bottles as we were unlikely to



find water before the Vallejo Gantner Hut near Mt Howitt. Except on our last day, on the Jamieson River, all our lunch spots lacked water.

We headed for Mt Speculation, which gave a dramatic view of Mt Buggery and the Crosscut Saw forming a narrow ridge with sides dropping precipitously to the Howqua and Wonnangatta River catchments to the west and east, respectively. Our route entailed following the Crosscut Saw across to Mt Howitt.

The Crosscut Saw, a narrow, undulating ridge set against the backdrop of mountain ranges, looked surreal—as if someone had let imagination run free in designing the scenery props for a dramatic stage play. It resembled a spine, rocky in part, joining the Howitt and Speculation ramparts. It also reminded me of the sort of plank footbridge that spans deep mountain gorges in Nepal, but fortunately it didn't sway.

This was one of the trip's highlights. The day was clear and sunny and the scenery spectacular. To the north-east squatted our friends, the Razor and the Viking, and to the west a jumble of hazy, pale-blue peaks prodded the sky.

White gentians with purple veins and yellow everlasting daisies were out in profusion on the slope leading down to the Crosscut Saw from Mt Speculation.

Stunted eucalypts bravely eke out an existence on the exposed ridge and clumps of rock pedestals have formed a natural sculpture garden and put their stamp of ancient times on the landscape.

About halfway along the Crosscut Saw, after a short but steep climb up Mt Buggery, we picked a lunch spot looking back at Mt Speculation. The drawback to our perch was that it also overlooked the scarred slopes of the western spurs below us where logging had taken place some 10 to 15 years ago. Logging on such a steep gradient and so close to a National Park? You bet.

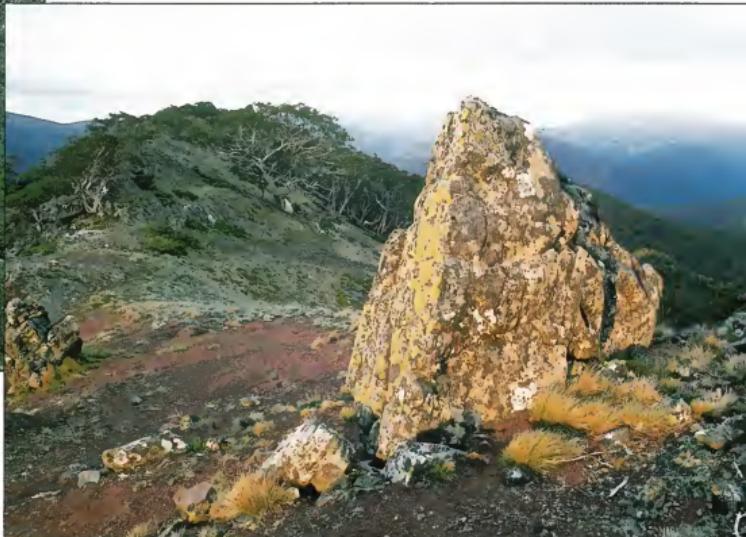
Craig mentioned a route straight up from the west on one of the spurs below us to

modest top. We were in refreshingly open country with gentle undulations and extensive views. To the west we could just make out Mt Buller with a balding top and ski-runs scratched out on its side. We followed the approximate line of our intended route past Mt Magdala as far as the Bluff, which looked and sounded as formidable as the Viking.

The panorama was a marvel of geological forms and history, a mixture of the gentle and harsh with the promise of moisture in the valleys counterbalancing the dryness on the tops.

After another 20 to 30 minutes we were at the Vallejo Gantner Hut, an A-frame structure built in 1971. The atmosphere inside was drowsy, almost enervating. Several blowflies buzzed erratically and testily against the large windows while a billy of water simmered over a low fire.

In the hut we met part of a group from Adelaide including a blind man in his sixties or seventies. He was happy to be back in the Victorian Alps and grateful to his friends who had guided him along the way.



The narrow ridge to Mt McDonald has many opportunities for photographic studies. Mt Clear is visible in the background (far right). Paul Sinclair

where we were having lunch. Our approach from Mt Speculation looked and sounded infinitely preferable.

We continued towards Mt Howitt after lunch. From this point another optical illusion came into play when distance teased the eyes. The length of the Crosscut Saw seemed to increase rather than decrease as we walked.

Once we were on the Mt Howitt side, we dropped our packs at the track junction and walked up the gentle slope to Howitt's

The Melbourne students were camped near the hut savouring a rest-day of sorts which had obviously included laundry duties. Their stoves were parked neatly near the water-pipe and all seemed marvellously under control.

'One or two have missed home and been a bit teary, but otherwise they're doing fine', a teacher said. She told us that the next day each girl would be taken to a spot in the bush to spend the night alone and would

be given a compass bearing to return to the next base camp.

We camped among the snow gums near the hut. A chilly wind blew mist in as we settled down to thick wedges of rich cheese-cake that Christine had dexterously knocked up with the help of a packet mix.

When we peered out of the tents in the morning, thick mist and a cold wind signalled the need for tights, warm gear and brisk walking.

Initially we were walking through country that had obviously been grazed because of the mix of weeds and exotic grasses.

The mist began to lift at about 11 am as we reached Hells Window, an awe-inspiring slot in the escarpment on Mt Magdal.

Judy Kelly

and her husband Dave formerly lived in Sydney and did many walks in the Blue Mountains before moving to Canberra. Now they sandwich their bushwalking between work and family commitments and are introducing their two young boys to pack walking.

grey cliff-face of the latter looked grim and uncompromising and the rocky ledges and spires gave the impression of a gloomy Scottish castle with strong defences. It felt that one false step and you'd plummet way below.

The play of mist and light on the ranges extending towards Mt Buller emphasised the dramatic scenery and created a lugubrious intensity.

Past Hells Window the dramatic theme looked set to continue when we spotted several horse-riders advancing towards us from the southwest. They could have been a posse of Macbeth's men—but no, as they drew closer, the Man from Snowy River materialised. A well-worn Driza-bone protected him, and his party of about six was equipped with saddles and bridles that had survived many seasons in the mountains.

Christine rather liked the horse-riders' contribution to the scenery because of their rustic touch. Perhaps...but what about the impact of those hooves on the fragile alpine vegetation at that altitude?

We had lunch with a view of the plains on a saddle below the King Billies, then headed south-west following minor ridges studded with small outcrops that resembled scales on a dinosaur's back. When we looked back in the afternoon, the Howitt Spur showed as a very dramatic descent with a backdrop of mountains huddling under a shawl of mist.

The mist began to lift as the author (in the foreground) and her companions reached Hells Window, a slot in the escarpment on Mt Magdal.
David Kelly

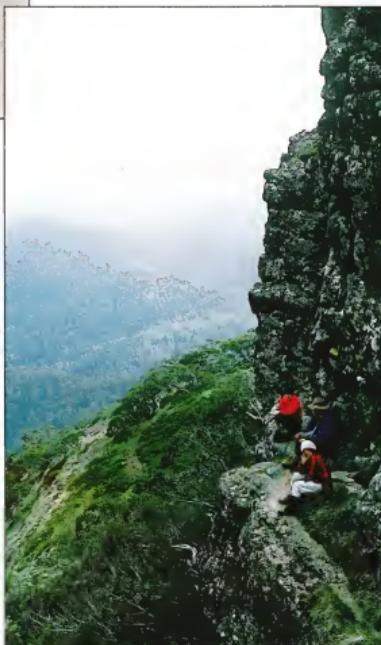
We joined the fire track, following it to the site of Chesters Yard where we were to camp. The smell of cattle hung heavily in the air and hooves had reduced sections of the creek's banks to a muddy mess.

We pitched our tents in a reasonably comfortable dip despite the accumulation of cold air as night fell. The camp gained a three-star rating when its resident frogs set up a chorus that sounded like stones being dropped into deep, still water.

The aim for the fifth day of our trip was to reach the Jamieson River for a high-quality waterside camp. This was going to be the trip's longest and possibly most challenging day. If we couldn't make the Jamieson, our fate would be a dry camp.

After an initial climb through forest we reached Mt Clear's open, grassy spaces with snow gums and black salleys sporting their distinctive green, silver and brown 'designer' trunks.

It was pleasant to walk through this clear, alpine stretch but it didn't last long enough.



Once beyond Mt Clear we endured interminable sidling through tussocky grass and spiky bushes along the steep, slippery slopes of Square Top and High Cone, losing time on a false spur. It was ankle-punishing stuff. We then had a slow, scrubby haul, following the ridge towards the Nobs.

Along the way we found a spot for lunch with patchy shade. We sat in our individual cocoons of silence, eating our dry lunches of bread, biscuits, cheese and honey.

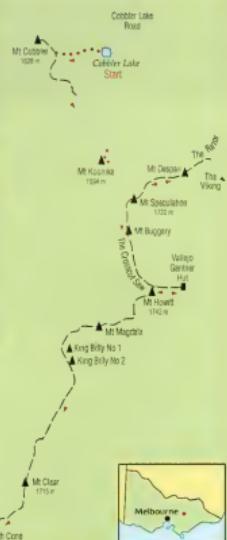
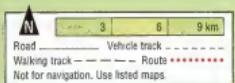
The only refreshing item on the menu was orange-flavoured Tang and I had to take it easy because my water ration had reached the halfway mark.

Insects uttered their shrill, vibrating calls making the afternoon a brittle mix of glare and sharp sounds. The prospect of a long afternoon with the sight of the formidable Bluff reminding us of tomorrow's climb didn't encourage us to linger.

After lunch the walking was relatively easier with a drop to a vehicular track but by 4 pm we had to decide whether to continue to the Jamieson or to opt for a dry camp.

We all wanted a river camp but I felt I'd done a full day's work already. Sounding uncharacteristically philosophical, Dave said: 'There's only so

Mt Cobbler to Mt McDonald



much the human body can do.' Thanks, Dave.

Our camp was near the turn-off to the Barkly River and had a backdrop of mountain or snow gums. Dave and Craig set off with water-bags and bottles while Christine and I set up camp. Then we waited and waited. An hour crept past. Where were they? Stuck down a no-return gully? Felled by injury? Bitten by a snake? Disoriented?

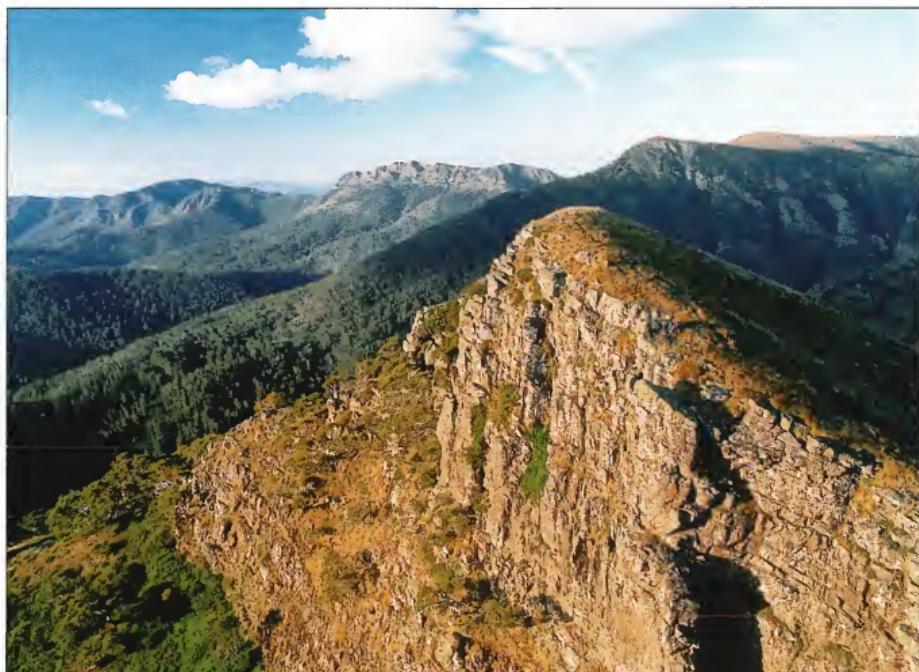
As we approached the bottom of the descent we entered forest that had been logged, the remaining trees reduced to poles with clusters of regenerating leaves. But as I passed one tree, I happened to look up and saw a large, fluffy tail filling up a hole. It was a possum. There was a bit of life yet in the forest.

With the smell of water in our nostrils, we gathered speed as we followed a road through the thick, green forest along the

the way back down the road to reach water but it was far easier to get than on the previous night.

To my amazement, Dave, Craig and Christine decided on a 5.30 am rise to climb the Bluff. With my walking turbines turned off, I was going to sleep in.

The next morning I relaxed in my sleeping-bag with tea that Craig had made. The trio set off at seven to dash up the Bluff while I listened to bird calls, convinced that



From Hells Window there are views of Mt Speculation (far left), the jagged crest of the Crosscut Saw (middle), the grassy dome of Mt Howitt (far right) and the cliff-face of Mt Magdala. Sinclair

We fiddled around the camp. Christine resorted to filing her nails and I paced the fire track or sat and gazed into the distance.

At long last our noble water carriers returned. Craig set his water cargo down, muttering: 'Good thing Chris didn't see where this came from.' (The water was from a puddle that had collected in the track's wheel ruts.)

The next day we all felt that our decision had been justified as we climbed up a narrow ridge to Mt McDonald with high rock steps interspersed with shrubs, grass and trees. The combination was ideal for photographic studies but it would have been tricky territory for tired walkers. Finally came a long, steep descent through dry, open forest with rocky outcrops along the way. The further west we went, the drier it seemed to get.

Jamieson's banks. Clear, cold, fast-flowing water for a lunch-time swim. Bliss!

After lunch came a climb along the well-graded and shady Link Road, a four-wheel-drive track. We'd all dismissed climbing the Bluff from the Jamieson River side because of steepness, scrub, heat and lack of time.

Despite the cool conditions for walking, I had a flat battery and was lagging behind. Also, my pack had developed a querulous squeak. Christine suggested that we swap packs and I became an instant convert to hers, which was 'designed specifically for the active outdoor woman'. It was the difference between economy and luxury.

We reached the Bluff car park where we'd arranged to meet the taxi-driver for our lift to Mansfield, and chose a camp between the trees. We had to walk part of

no one would reach the top before the taxi came to pick us up at nine o'clock.

From the top of the Bluff the three saw a sombre view of mountains, purple veining with indigo in early morning light, clouds heralding a storm. They had a last look at our route: sharp ridges and folds to the north extending towards Mt Buller, to the north-east, the sloping isthmus of Mt Cobbler, our first climb.

They got back in time and we rolled off to Mansfield as the rain began to fall after a walk that had offered a variety of dramatic scenery, weather and people. It had also tested our stamina and given us a taste of sections of Victoria's Australian Alps Walking Track. ☺

The best maps to use for this walk are the Howitt and Mansfield 1:100 000 Natmap sheets.



In the land of the giants. The mountains of the Khumbu make humans feel very small indeed. Looking south-east to Kantega.

Glimpses of Nepal

A journey through the big mountains of a small country, by John Cato





Top, Mt Everest, Nuptse and Lhotse at dusk. **Near right**, the Solu Khumbu is populated by the Sherpa people who are famous for their warmth, hospitality and climbing expertise. Two Sherpa girls near Phortse. **Far right**, an early morning at Namche Bazaar (3440 metres), looking south-west to Kwangde. Most trekkers stop at 'Namche' to acclimatise for a few days before continuing up the mountain to Kala Pattar near Everest Base Camp or to Gokyo. The village has grown considerably since this photo was taken in the 1980s.





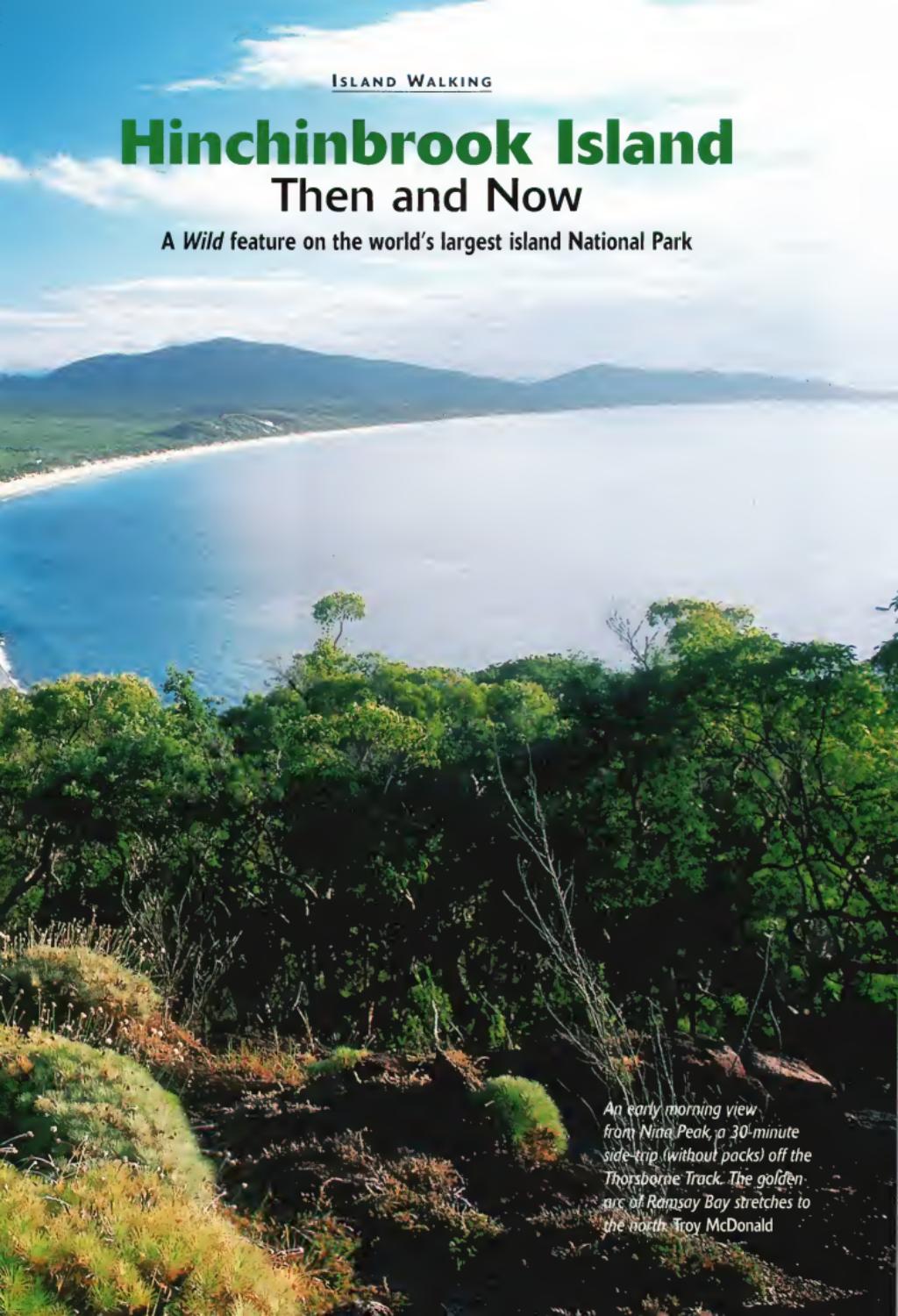


ISLAND WALKING

Hinchinbrook Island

Then and Now

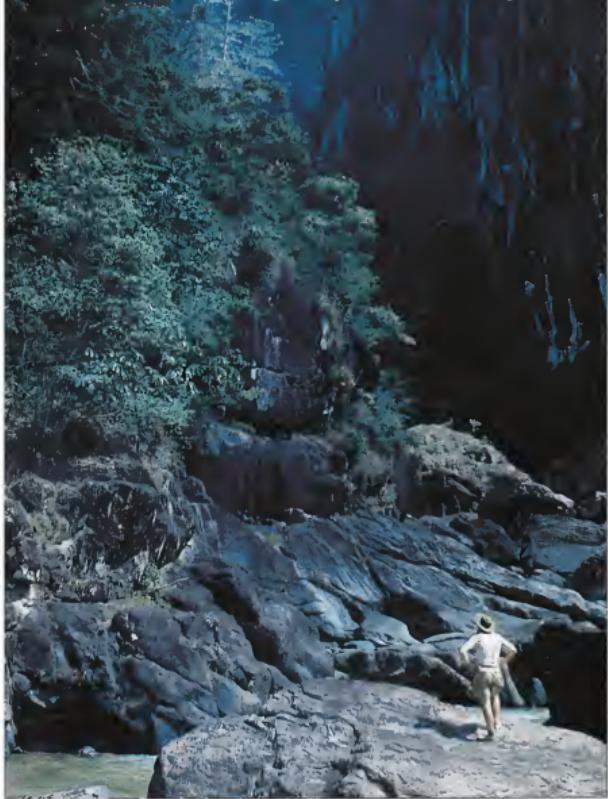
A Wild feature on the world's largest island National Park



An early morning view from Nina Peak, a 30-minute side trip (without packs) off the Thorsborne Track. The golden arc of Ramsay Bay stretches to the north. Troy McDonald

Then...

John Béchervaise writes of an attempt to climb Hinchinbrook Island's highest peaks in the early 1950s



Hinchinbrook's rugged interior is as enchanting as the 'scalloped sands' and 'curling surf' along its coast. For early explorers the going was tough. John Béchervaise writes of his 1952 expedition: '...it seemed impossible that the foreshortened slash of verdure visible from the sea could entail such toil.'

Béchervaise collection

During August 1952 the Australian Geographical Society assisted in the formation of another branch of the Schoolboy Exploration Movement, at Scots College, Warwick, Queensland.

An inaugural expedition was arranged primarily as a happy holiday adventure but apart from its educational value in formal subjects—geography, geology and the biological sciences—the project was also designed to introduce members to bush craft, map reading, and self-reliance in a difficult terrain.

This account covers an aspect of the venture—a reconnaissance of the granite ridges leading to the highest peaks of Hinchinbrook Island, north Queensland...

THERE, MOUNTING BEFORE US IN ROYAL blue towers, was the map translated into reality; an island hardly known except from seaborne vision, its remote heights untrodden, its vast, Eden fresh valleys open only to the elements. For every thousand who glimpse Hinchinbrook's fantastic mountains, not one sets foot on its scalloped sands, and even those who test curling surf seldom penetrate its jungle defences. The green spurs soar directly from the sea to ramparts of granite between three and four thousand feet above [1 foot = 0.3 metre]. They spike the clouds, silver and majestic when the air is calm, on windy days torn by the ravines, sometimes drooping sullenly almost to the waves and remaining clutched by the jungle for days...

On Hinchinbrook at times there is a curious absence of birds, a few terns wheeling over the surf, a hawk circling the crag. High in the air white cockatoos fly singly with raucous cries, and kingfishers are glimpsed flashing over the mangrove lagoons. The jungle is often submerged in silence, a hush that com-

'The lure of the peaks gave us little time for beachcombing and idleness.'

panions the deep green light and the malignant lawyer vines. Other animal life is also unobtrusive, nocturnal and difficult to observe, yet one is conscious of endless, quiet rustlings in the vegetation and most mornings reveal fresh marsupial tracks in the sand. In the olive depths of the tidal pools and in most of the creeks flowing into the Channel may lurk great and small crocodiles, cold, repulsive, sharing the flooding tide with cruising sharks matching their malice. The powerful pythons or carpet snakes, usually coiled in a watchful slumber in the treetops, are not sinister. They are lazy, gaily patterned guardians in this Eden, sliding luxuriously in the high, dappled shadow. Their venomous cousins of the earth are as common but less attractive in every way.

A fine, clear night possesses a restless tropical energy. The stars pulsate and the sea glows. The lagoons, too, are threshed by large shoals of mullet.

The lure of the peaks gave us little time for beachcombing and idleness. The morning after landing we were all astir at first light and packing our rucksacks for an inland expedition. An obvious spur bearing south and west rose fairly steadily to the heights. At length the last water-bottle was stoppered and the party gathered on a granite rib where king tides and storms had deposited myriads of small pumice fragments—the lightest and most enduring of flotsam—from some far-away volcano. There was an in-

formal briefing—and we were off in single file through the brush. The mangroves gave way to stately paper-barks with splendid, white trunks and emerald-green, pendent foliage; higher came a profusion of tea-tree, she-oaks, eucalypts and banksias knitted together by wire grass and sarsaparilla.

To our surprise the spur initially provided little difficulty, only packed trees, thickets and wire grass, and by midday we had gained about 1000 feet and a beautiful, ferny pool in a small ravine. Below the sedges and bog rush lay a green shade of maidenhair and clubmoss, coral ferns and sundews. It was a welcome lunching halt with superb views of the coast.

A small plateau, bright with the starry foliage and cream pin-cushions of a borya (*B. septentrionalis*—the Queensland pin-cushion lily) and crowned with skull-like, granite monoliths, led by a narrow col to the flank of the main island ridge already revealing naked rock. The weather was still and sunlit for the tussle, which was becoming harder, and as the afternoon wore on our progress became inversely slow to our expenditure of energy. The cool, aerial depths leaped to the sea and were spiritual refreshment but our bodies steamed with the effort of thrusting upward, hands clutching sticks like gigantic hair sprouting from the furrowed granite hide of a lost-world tellurian. At last his mighty spine, 700 feet high, rose without easy compromise. For a while we found no way up but traversed slowly in a south-easterly direction on a rising niche at the foot of the cliffs.

It had become evident that we might not find water on the mountain and therefore our quart-pots, replenished at the lunch halt, were already tantalising but forbidden—two qualities which invariably excite desire. Every cleft was now being minutely examined but the plunging granite held little moisture. With even a trickle we might have camped and taken the ascent of the crags refreshed by a night's rest; however, time and thirst require quenching, and it was decided to ascend the ridge that night if possible.

At the point where the natural terrace dropped away below a wall, a 'chimney', scarcely 12-feet high, which evidently led to more broken rock rose most conveniently. It is extraordinary how these chinks occur in most mountains' armour. In perfect security we wedged our way upward, backs to the wall and feet pressed in opposition, but out of respect for the rules each man was roped. By the time the last man edged along the shelf and swung a simian silhouette up the wall, the vanguard had slashed a pretty

furrow to the summit ridge some 600 feet above.

By stealing time we had conserved water but, rather ruthlessly, my first action on the ridge was to call in all water-bottles. Exactly three gallons (1 gallon = 4.55 litres) of water constituted our licence to remain on the premises. For about an hour there were muttered imprecations as we struggled among harsh dwarf banksias and brittle tanton (*Leptospermum flavescens*) in efforts

sum to an appreciable fraction of three gallons. I still hoped that we might find a trickle or pool up among the cushion plants of the high granite, but the morning passed in waterless toil up exceedingly steep spurs and towers aggregating a further 1000 feet but several probably twice that altitude.

Eventually we were brought abruptly upon a great battleship prow more than 100 feet high. Hinchinbrook was reluctant to yield her peaks. We were becoming dehydrated by our exertions. On the south side of the 'prow' we found a possible route and followed it faithfully, striving all the time, in the light of experience, to discover a way to its main deck.

In the early afternoon the possibility of further lateral progress was denied us by a ravine, yet above, over a difficult start of 15 or 18 feet, there appeared a pitch that should 'go'. The summit of the Thumb lay only 300 feet above us and Bowen appeared easy from the saddle a rifle-shot distant. However, after some effort we failed to make progress and reluctantly accepted defeat. We vowed we would return after rain or carrying more water.

In the dusk we regained our ferny pool. With salt and water a transformation rapidly took place and we sang in the fire-light. By this time our estimation of the mountain had ebbed. Give us another chance—with



The morning after landing we were all astir at first light and packing our rucksacks for an inland expedition. Béchervaise collection

to light fires and find coverts. These accomplished, we fed well, swallowed salt tablets and drank sparingly, generally black coffee.

There was utter bliss in lying contorted by stones, lightly draped under tired stars with the countless cheepings of some insect creatures sounding like high-pitched fairy bells and the slow-moving air heavy with the scent of boronia drifting up our dark wall. The fires, of brushwood and small trunks, soon flickered to ash and the night wrapped us in sleep 2000 feet above the indolent Pacific.

The next day water soon became a genuine problem and it became clear that unless we could reach the pinnacles of the Thumb and Mt Bowen—both within a mile (1 mile = 1.6 kilometres)—and be well on the way down before sunset, their attainment would have to be postponed. Twelve men, even on the most meagre rations, con-

John Béchervaise

was for many years a teacher—in the UK, at Geelong College, and later at Geelong Grammar School—and guided students on adventurous journeys to many parts of Australia.

He led exploratory expeditions to Antarctica during the 1950s and travelled, climbed and explored widely. He was a writer and poet with many published works and was for a time co-editor of *Walkabout*. He died in 1998 and is survived by his wife Lorna.

water—we said. And perhaps the reluctant mountain heard and growled under his cloudy nightcap.

This excerpt was taken from an article which first appeared in *Walkabout* magazine in April 1953. For complete contrast to their ridge ascent, John Béchervaise and two others later went up 'a valley of gigantic boulders' but made little distance and returned 'quite sure that the valleys did not hold the way to the high ridges'. A group of six made another unsuccessful attempt on the Thumb and Mt Bowen. The entire group then cruised to Mulligan Bay and made their way to the huge, split monolith of Diamantina.

The Thorsborne Track

Walking a tropical-island paradise, by *Troy McDonald*



Afternoon storm clouds over Zoe Bay and Mt Bowen (1119 metres). The Thorsborne Track gives access to many of the island's features and presents few walking difficulties. This impressive peak can be admired from afar—it is not en route! McDonald

Hinchinbrook Island



PALM-FRINGED BAYS AND SANDY BEACHES, mountain peaks of 1100 metres, extensive mangrove forests, tropical rainforest and fragile heath vegetation. A continental island off the Queensland coast, Hinchinbrook Island has a diverse range of spectacular scenery perhaps best recognised by noting its World Heritage, National Park and Marine Park status. More than 390 square kilometres in area, Hinchinbrook is also the largest island National Park in the world. The Thorsborne Track is a walk of 32 kilometres which gives access to many of the island's features. The track is not graded and presents few walking difficulties. It can be walked in either direction. The track is described here as a southerly walk

leaving the mainland at Cardwell and returning to Lucinda.

When to go

The island is generally open to walkers all year round but can be closed during periods of extreme dry in spring or cyclonic influence in summer. Adjacent to an area with one of the highest annual rainfalls in Australia, the walking during summer can be extremely hot and humid with flooded streams being potentially hazardous to walkers. With this in mind, late autumn and winter provide the best options for walking with comfortable temperatures and water readily available from the creeks.

Safety

Although the track is quite rough in parts, there are few navigational difficulties. However, a map and compass should be carried and you should know how to use them. Fuel stoves are required due to the total fire ban on the island. Walkers who intend to deviate from the general route to tackle the island's mountain peaks should consult the Queensland Department of Environment & Heritage for information about these areas.

It is also worth noting that swimming in or adjacent to the mangrove creeks on the island is not recommended because of the possible presence of saltwater crocodiles. Signs erected by National Parks warn of the trouble spots but the locals tell me that encounters are extremely rare, and I have certainly never seen crocodiles while walking on the island. And, finally, take twice the normal amount of sandfly/mosquito repellent. The local insects have undoubtedly acquired a taste for the flesh of visiting walkers.

Map

The *Hillock Point* 1:50 000 Royal Australian Survey Corps map is of most use to walkers and should be carried by all parties. Walkers unfamiliar with the island's terrain and who plan to tackle the mountain areas may find the Sunmap aerial photographs of some interest for familiarisation before departure.

Further reading

See articles in *Wild* no 45.

Permits

Permits can be obtained through the Department of Environment & Heritage office in Cardwell; phone (07) 4066 8601. They are issued to limit numbers to 40 persons on the track at one time. Walkers intent on visiting Mts Bowen or Diamantina should apply for specific mountain access permits.

Access

The island is serviced by ferry operators at Cardwell in the north and Lucinda in the south. Both operators work together to provide bus shuttle services to return you to your chosen point of departure.

The walk

Although not a lengthy walk, the track deserves at least four days of walking and three nights to do justice to the unique scenery of the terrain. The walk described here has overnight stops at Little Ramsay Bay, Zoe Bay and Mulligan Falls. Worthwhile extensions to this itinerary could include overnight stays at either Nina Bay or Banksia Bay; those adequately skilled and prepared can camp on the North Saddle *en route* to Mt Bowen by way of Warrawilla Creek.

Day one: Ramsay Bay to Little Ramsay Bay

The boat trip to the drop-off point in Missionary Bay is a great introduction to the scenery of the island. Beneath the craggy peaks of Mt Bowen the boat follows one of the island's veins, a glassy, calm creek sheltered by mangrove thickets on either side. Dropping you on to a boardwalk at the head of the creek, a sandy track leads over a coastal dune and on to the magnificent ocean beach of Ramsay Bay. Walking south along the beach enables you to search for

one of the fossilised crabs or shells for which the beach is known. At the southern headland of Ramsay Bay leave the beach and climb a forested ridge before descending to Blacksand Beach. Once you reach the beach, skirt the western side of the lagoon and follow the beach south before finding the track that follows another forested ridge on to the saddle beneath Nina Peak. At the top of this saddle is a faint track to the summit of the peak. Without packs this side-trip will take about 30 minutes. The views from the top are magnificent. The golden arc of Ramsay Bay stretches to the north, protecting the mangrove creeks of Missionary Bay that extend right to the base of the Mt Bowen massif. Returning to the main track, descend a clear gully to the mangrove-lined upper reaches of Nina Creek. Fill your water-bottles before following the mangroves to Nina Bay's beach. The epitome of a tropical paradise, the beach is lined with coconut palms and is dominated by Nina Peak and the misty summit of Mt Bowen. Follow the beach to the headland at its southern end where some scrambling will take you over the headland and down to Boulder Bay. From here climb another



The walk AT A GLANCE	
Grade	Easy to moderate
Length	Four days
Type	Coastal scenery, tropical rainforest
Region	North Queensland
Best time	Late autumn to early spring
Special points	Diverse coastal scenery, mountain peaks, freshwater streams and waterfalls

saddle and descend to the beach of Little Ramsay Bay. The camping ground is adjacent to Warrawilla Lagoon and has splendid views of the eastern face of Mt Bowen.

Day two: Little Ramsay Bay to Zoe Bay

With full water-bottles, continue the now familiar pattern of following the beach to its southern headland before scrambling over rocks to the next secluded bay. From the southern end of this small bay the track enters forest and leads up to a drier saddle of eucalypt and grass-trees. Early in the dry season some small waterfalls can be found at Banksia Creek in idyllic surroundings. Scramble down a rocky watercourse to the melaleuca wetlands behind Zoe Bay. The track skirts the western side of the swamps before entering the tropical rainforest of the Zoe Bay catchment. Although often promoted as a rainforest walk, the Thorsborne Track only passes through rainforest for around ten per cent of its length, and no-

where is it more scenic than in this area of freshwater streams lined with palms and rainforest hardwoods. Several palm swamps have to be negotiated before Zoe Bay. To keep your feet dry you will be forced to hop from the base of one palm to the next requiring all your athletic skills to avoid the knee-deep, sticky mud. All this is in stark contrast to the glorious arc of golden sand the track finally reaches when it opens out on to Zoe Bay. Set up camp at the southern end of the bay before watching the sun dip behind the silhouette of Mt Bowen.

Day three: Zoe Bay to Mulligan Falls

Do yourself a favour and wake in time for the sunrise over Zoe Bay. If your luck is in and there are few clouds the craggy peaks of Mt Bowen will glow with golden hues as the sun rises over the Coral Sea. From the camping ground at the southern end of Zoe Bay follow South Zoe Creek before crossing to its northern side and reaching the plunge pool of Zoe Falls. This is considered to be the highlight of the track. The crystal-clear waters of the pool, complete with schools of flagtail perch (also known as jungle perch), are too inviting to resist. Refreshed, and with full water-bottles, follow a steep section of track over rocky slabs that eventually opens on to South Zoe Creek above the falls. Here are fine views of Zoe Bay and more swimming opportunities. Continue following South Zoe Creek along its western bank until the track leaves the creek to go along a spur that separates South Zoe and Sweetwater Creeks. Passing through more patches of rainforest, drop down into the Sweetwater and Diamantina Creek catchments. Water is usually available at both creeks and a side track to the east can be followed to Sunken Reef Bay for more coastal scenery. After crossing Diamantina Creek, climb another spur before descending a steep slope to Mulligan Falls. Perhaps not as scenic as Zoe Falls, the waterfall is none the less pretty and there is a swimming-hole in which to cool off if the weather is fine.

Day four: Mulligan Falls to George Point

The final day of walking to the ferry pick-up point at George Point is easy but the scenery is perhaps not as spectacular as on the previous three days. From the falls follow the track south-west for two kilometres through more rainforest before skirting the western boundary of the Diamantina Creek mangrove estuary. Opening out on to Mulligan Bay, all that remains of the Thorsborne Track is a short beach walk to the ferry rendezvous at George Point. ☺

Troy McDonald is a freelance writer/photographer based in Brisbane. His photographs have appeared in several publications including the range of Australian Conservation Foundation diaries and Wilderness Society calendars. Having visited Hinchinbrook Island a number of times during both the wet and dry seasons, Troy and his wife Helen consider it one of their favourite walking destinations.

The Great Wollemi Traverse

Tyrone Thomas and Sven Klinge tackle some of Australia's wildest walking—on Sydney's doorstep!



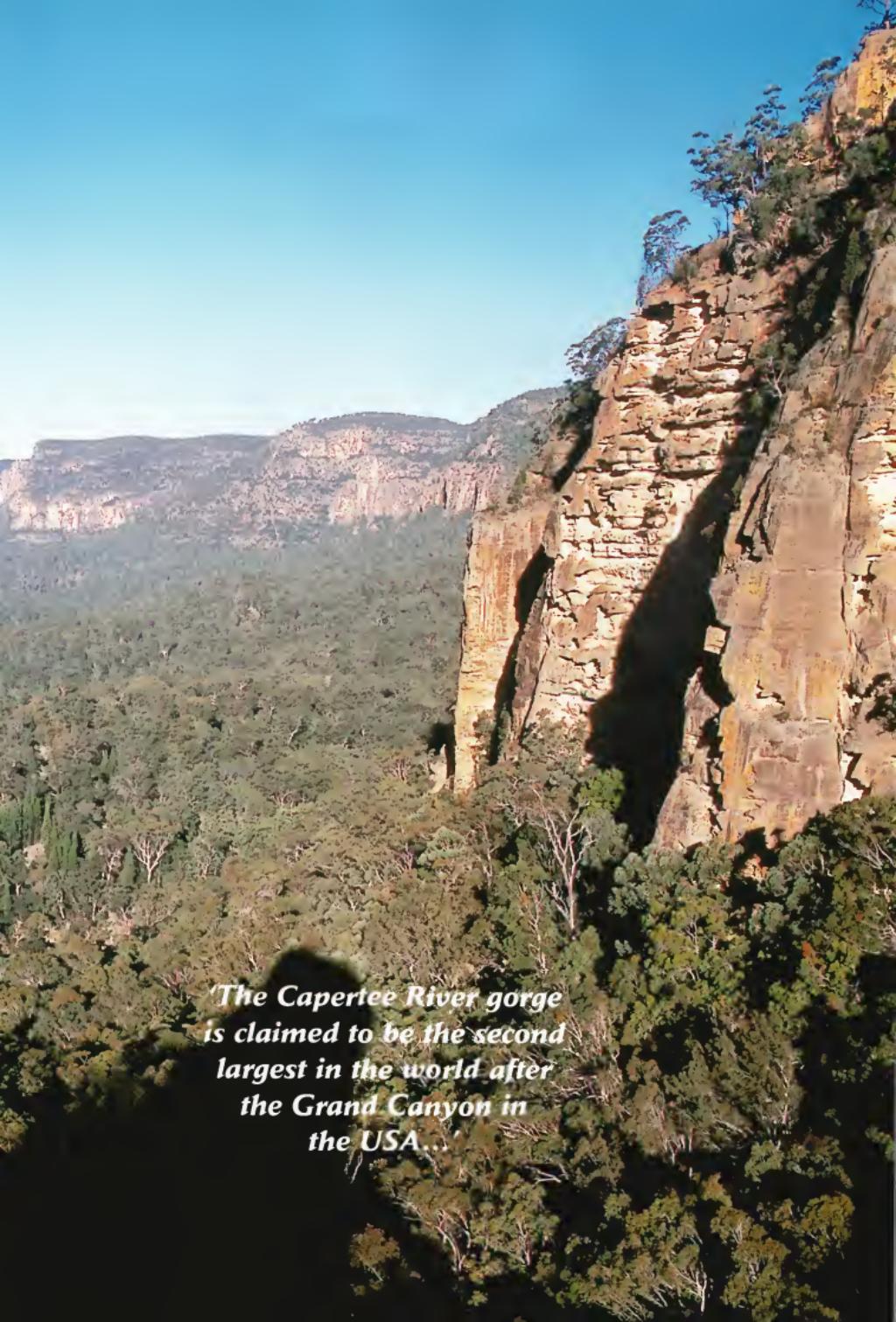
WOLLEMI NATIONAL PARK CONSISTS OF half a million hectares of some of the roughest, toughest wilderness in the country. Despite being on the outskirts of Australia's largest city, its convoluted labyrinth of rugged gorges, chasms and ravines remains mostly in pristine condition, much to the delight of hard-core bushwalkers and canyoneers. In fact, it is only due to its inhospitable character that the area has withstood mining, logging, grazing, and hydroelectric development attempts. So one cannot be surprised that a botanical wonder such as the Wollemi pine remained undiscovered for over 200 years even though Sydney's four million residents live just 200 kilometres away.

All the essential ingredients of expedition-style walking are here: isolation, long distances, rugged terrain, and mandatory self-sufficiency. Immersed between towering sandstone cliffs, parties are completely separated from the outside world. The cliffs have been weathered over millions of years and ravaged by an unforgiving climate that regularly alternates between torrential downpours and protracted periods of drought.

The area was one of the most difficult to map and contemporary walkers must feel sorry for poor Frederick D'Arcy, a junior draftsman in the Surveyor General's Department, whose job it was to survey the entire Capertee catchment with teams of mules throughout the early 1800s. Back then the closest town for provisions was Bathurst.

Even with today's ease of access to the park's boundaries, detailed topographical coverage and high-tech equip-

Few journeys within Wollemi National Park are more ambitious than a full traverse from west to east. It is virtually impossible to walk the park along its longitudinal axis as you would be going against the grain of the countless ravines and gorges. The only practical routes are along the rivers. Pictured is the Capertee River gorge. Ian Brown



*'The Capertee River gorge
is claimed to be the second
largest in the world after
the Grand Canyon in
the USA...'*

ment, traversing the Wollemi wilderness is still not a small feat.

Walkers normally progress to this Wagnerian park after cutting their teeth on the Blue Mountains to the south. Along the banks of the serene Kowmung River and beneath the beautiful bluegums in the Grose Valley visitors learn the basics of minimal-impact overnight camping with self-sufficient independence. In the depths of the Wollemi, however, you are confronted by further obstacles: remoteness, quicksand, and fickle weather that can change the Colo River into a brutal torrent, turning your weekend adventure into a desperate undertaking.

We set off in the stifling summer heat of Boxing Day 1998. On that day a number of men sailed to their deaths in the Sydney to Hobart yacht race. Besides ourselves—fellow guidebook authors—our party included Sven's friend Emma. Since the entire route was alongside a river, we didn't expect any great uphill slogs. We also assumed that navigation should not be a problem; the topography of the terrain literally forces you to stay on the right course. As we were to find out, in such inhospitable terrain assumptions have a habit of turning into wishful thinking.

Civilisation is left behind at Glen Davis, an historical mining ghost town by the Capert-

reef, passing through, but the owners allow you to inspect the ruins if permission is asked. 'The Poplars' station owners live in a large, old estate house just to the west of the gate. Their main concern is souveniring the piles of old equipment that remain among the ruins.

Once we reached the far side of the property, we climbed a prominent slag heap that overlooks the derelict refinery ruins. It is difficult to identify the main attraction. Certainly the decaying industrial complex and mining town are a central feature, but so too is the steep, cliff-lined Capertee River gorge in which Glen Davis nestles peacefully. In the background looms the prominent plateau of Mt Gundangaroo (789 metres).

As this is an historical place, a study of past events is appropriate. William Cox's companion, James Blackman, first saw and discovered the Capertee valley in the early 19th century. By 1821 the first settlers were moving into Glen Alice nearby; the headwaters of the Capertee River were surveyed a decade later. By 1873 oil shale had been found at Glen Davis; ten years later it was extracted through a number of individual leases. The first commercial operations began in 1940, necessitated by Japanese blockades of Australian fuel imports in the Pacific.

In its short-lived heyday, the township had hundreds of buildings including a bank, churches, and even a cinema. Crude oil production topped 100 000 litres a day. In the 1950s the main seam had reduced to a width of 30 centimetres and the high costs of production couldn't compete with imports. The operations were some £5 million in debt and, by 1952, all the miners and their families had moved to find greener pastures elsewhere.

Descending from the slag heap, we rounded the corner and entered the Wollemi National Park, continually gazing up at the massive, multi-tiered cliffs on both sides. Some of the walls topped 300 metres, putting them on a par with the better known Grose Valley near Blackheath. The forest here is dominated by stringybarks and iron-barks with the occasional bluegum and bloodwood.

An old road continues east, allowing easy walking. The surface is dominated by the dross of black oil shale, which burns quite brightly in a camp-fire. The old property of Goorangooba Station is passed through near the confluence with Goorangooba Creek gorge. The track turns away from the water and heads up a steep, rocky spur before plummeting again to the shady, grassy banks of the Capertee. Numerous pools flanked by sandy beaches and rocks dominate the river along here, offering ideal swimming opportunities. For a moment we flirted with the idea of simply staying the week in such an idyllic paradise. Just for a moment.



Immense cliffs separate you from the outside world during the walk down the Capertee and Colo River gorges. Except for a few side-creeks, these massive cliffs are largely unbroken for over 50 kilometres. This walker is approaching Wollemi Creek.

Sven Klinge

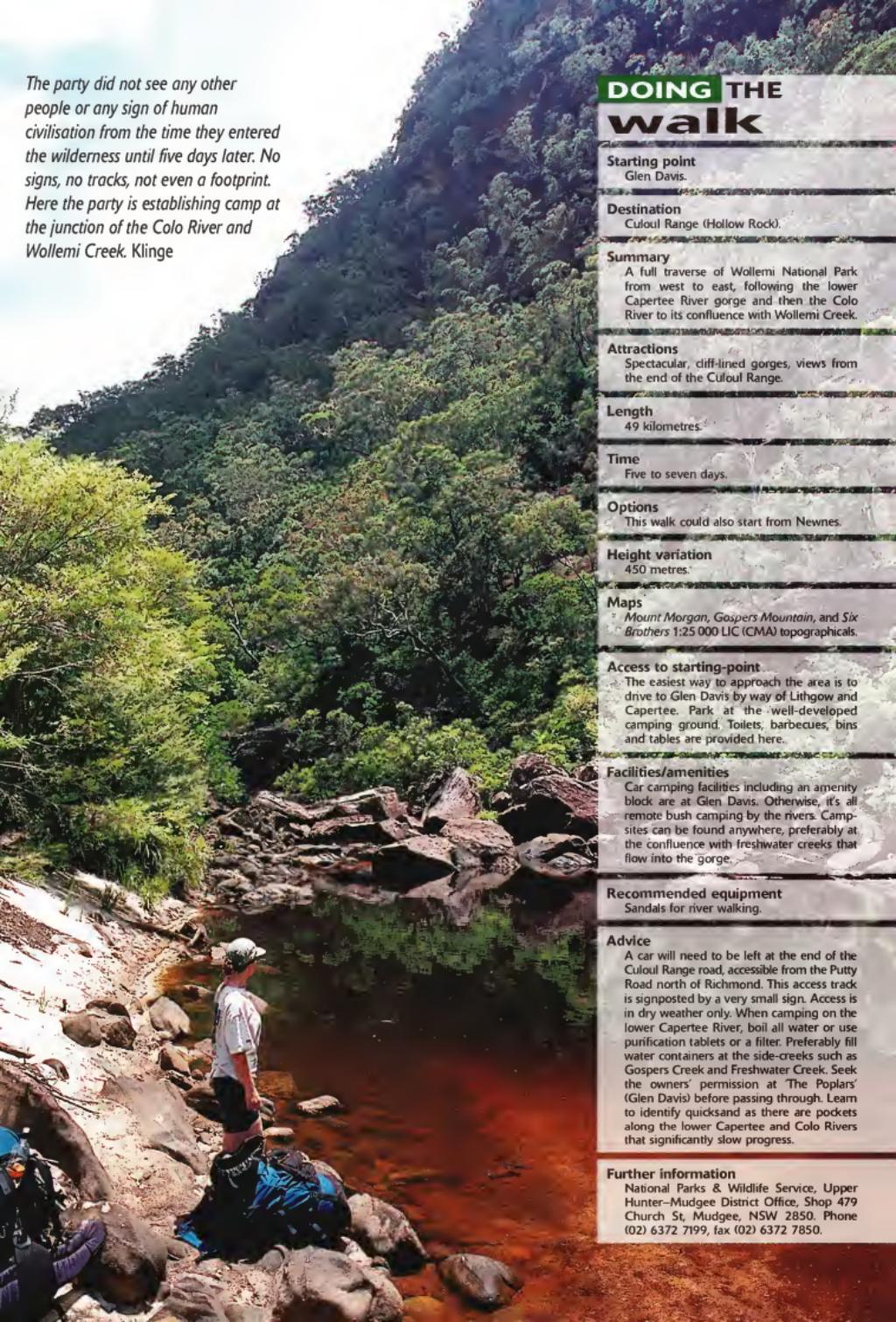
Few journeys within Wollemi National Park are more ambitious than a full traverse from west to east. It is virtually impossible to walk the park along its longitudinal axis as you would be going 'against the grain' of the countless ravines and gorges requiring constant abseils and rockclimbs. The only practical routes are along the rivers, and the core wilderness is drained by the mighty Colo, formed by the confluence of the Wolgan and Capertee Rivers.

We planned this epic walk with trepidation and excitement. The traverse is fairly flat and only 50 kilometres long but we figured that a week would not be an overestimate.

A brief perusal of the *Mount Morgan* topographical map reveals much of the journey but not the beauty or the challenges. A considerable car shuttle is required: one car must be at the end of the Culoul Range (Hollow Rock); the start is 200 kilometres away at Glen Davis by way of the Bells Line of Road and Lithgow.

As you drive through the valley to Glen Davis, crumbling building foundations and lonely chimney stacks remind you of the pioneering miners. We wondered what they had thought of the precipitous, orange sandstone cliffs that enclose the valley. Was it a wasteland to be conquered and gentrified by traditional European methods or a place to be revered for its timeless grandeur?

The industrial ruins are on private property at the end of the main Glen Davis road. The signs on the large, white gate warn trespassers of the consequences that will befall them should they even think about



The party did not see any other people or any sign of human civilisation from the time they entered the wilderness until five days later. No signs, no tracks, not even a footprint. Here the party is establishing camp at the junction of the Colo River and Wollemi Creek. Klinge

DOING THE walk

Starting point
Glen Davis.

Destination
Culoul Range (Hollow Rock).

Summary
A full traverse of Wollemi National Park from west to east, following the lower Capertee River gorge and then the Colo River to its confluence with Wollemi Creek.

Attractions
Spectacular, cliff-lined gorges, views from the end of the Culoul Range.

Length
49 kilometres.

Time
Five to seven days.

Options
This walk could also start from Newnes.

Height variation
450 metres.

Maps
Mount Morgan, Gospers Mountain, and Six Brothers 1:25 000 LIC (CMA) topographicals.

Access to starting-point
The easiest way to approach the area is to drive to Glen Davis by way of Lithgow and Capertee. Park at the well-developed camping ground. Toilets, barbecues, bins and tables are provided here.

Facilities/amenities

Car camping facilities including an amenity block are at Glen Davis. Otherwise, it's all remote bush camping by the rivers. Campsites can be found anywhere, preferably at the confluence with freshwater creeks that flow into the gorge.

Recommended equipment
Sandals for river walking.

Advice

A car will need to be left at the end of the Culoul Range road, accessible from the Putty Road north of Richmond. This access track is signposted by a very small sign. Access is in dry weather only. When camping on the lower Capertee River, boil all water or use purification tablets or a filter. Preferably fill water containers at the side-creeks such as Gospers Creek and Freshwater Creek. Seek the owners' permission at 'The Poplars' (Glen Davis) before passing through. Learn to identify quicksand as there are pockets along the lower Capertee and Colo Rivers that significantly slow progress.

Further information

National Parks & Wildlife Service, Upper Hunter-Mudgee District Office, Shop 479 Church St, Mudgee, NSW 2850. Phone (02) 6372 7199, fax (02) 6372 7850.

As we had left early, our first night's objective was Myrtle Creek beyond the end of the vehicular track but we discovered that this is a poor site. In retrospect, the best camping opportunities are at:

- the Capertee River at its confluence with Freshwater Creek (good site with pool);
- the Capertee River just downstream from its confluence with Myrtle Creek (excellent site with picturesque swimming-hole);
- the Capertee River downstream from its confluence with Gospers Creek (excellent site with large pool);
- the Colo River just upstream from its confluence with Girribung Creek (where the river turns from south to east);
- Wollemi Creek upstream from its confluence with the Colo River (several options).

Once the road peters out—about ten kilometres from the start of the walk—we found that it was still easy going through open woodland on the southern bank. However, as the vegetation thickened, we soon selected the river as our preferred route. Off came the boots and out came the sandals as our footwear of choice until we left the gorge on the last day.

From Myrtle Creek onwards, the Capertee River flows largely underground leaving wide banks of sand. Sometimes it's only a tiny trickle; at other times deep pools and cascades create major obstacles. As the Capertee River flows through private property upstream, we recommend that you do not use the water for drinking or cooking. Instead, fill your bottles at the numerous creeks which enter on both sides. Water purification tablets or filters would also be handy. However, the intense 40°C heat, slow progress and long distances between reliable creeks forced us to drink from the river occasionally.

During the following week, each day's goal was simply to get as far down the river as possible. The constant twisting of the gorge quickly caused us to lose orientation and for long stints we didn't really know where we were. Nor did we care! It didn't

seem right to have a meticulously crafted schedule in such majestic scenery.

The gorge presented a variety of challenges. As we continued, the notorious quicksand worsened and large patches made progress excruciatingly slow. It disguised itself well: one moment Emma was walking merrily along the river; the next her legs had entirely disappeared! We had to pull ourselves out on numerous occasions, always careful not to leave our sandals stuck in the treacherous riverbed. We wondered how D'Arcy's horses fared in 1832 when he was trying to walk from the Hawkesbury River to Mudgee.

Occasionally the quicksand forced us off the riverbed altogether and we had to plough through thick vegetation choked with tangled vines and ferns. Pioneering bushwalkers have noticed that the river has silted up considerably since land clearing in the upper Capertee River area has become more prevalent. In February 1931 Max Gentle and Alex Colley walked through the Colo gorge, taking almost two weeks to emerge at the other side of the gorge country, north of Windsor. Their enthusiasm was somewhat dampened by the 'fierce undergrowth'.

Massive boulder block-ups were another obstacle; these required painstaking pack-hauling between us. Fortunately, these were frequently accompanied by deep pools and we must have swum in just about every one to escape the midsummer heat. Due to the dark tannin stain, the surface of the river was also quite warm and only by diving down a couple of metres could we cool off for a moment.

Sand, sand, sand, everywhere! It got into our packs, our clothes, our tent, our food and even into

our drink containers. Most annoyingly, it sat between the sandal straps and our feet, working away at both surfaces. Add sunburn to the equation and our feet weren't in the best condition by the end. Even seemed oblivious to the torture as he trotted along listening to Steve Waugh score a century in the Melbourne test match on a small, solar-powered personal stereo headset.

The terrain changes dramatically at the confluence of the Wolgan and Capertee



Wollemi



Rivers. This is where the Colo River officially begins. The riverbed becomes completely flat and the sides of the gorge extremely steep, forming a large, flat-bottomed canyon. The walking is fairly easy here—despite being in the heart of the Wollemi wilderness. If any calamity were to befall us at this point, it would be several days' walk out in either direction for help. It was ironic to think that while we sheltered in the heat, the yachtsmen and -women in Bass Strait were being savaged by a horrendous storm. Looking up at the debris in the casuarina oaks several metres above us made us realise how violent the river could become. Only the smaller side-creeks would offer refuge in the event of one of these horrific floods. Coachwood rainforest grows in these cool, sheltered ra-

vines with a thick understorey of ferns and lomandra grass. The water that trickled down through these canyons was noticeably cooler indicating that sunlight is rare. In fact, many of the thousands of chasms that abound in western Wollemi are so narrow that they cannot be seen from the air. New ones were still being discovered as late as the 1990s and who knows how many more there are.

This part of the gorge—downstream from the Wolgan–Capertee confluence—was sur-

way to deep, dark pools of pristine water. We camped at the junction, marvelling at the glow in the ironstone-dominated cliffs at sunset. It was marvellous to have unobscured views from the *bottom* of a gorge rather than from the usual lookout at the cliff-top. Being so close to water it was like having your cake and eating it too.

On the final day we said goodbye to the Colo that had accompanied us for so long and headed up Wollemi Creek near its sharp



A full traverse of the Wollemi National Park from west to east entails following the lower Capertee River gorge and then the Colo River to its confluence with Wollemi Creek (pictured), the longest watercourse in the park. Brown hairpin bend at the end of the Culoul Range.

prisingly barren of wildlife. Goannas, ducks and currawongs were prolific further upstream; only the occasional prints in the sand from a snake or wallaby betrayed their existence here.

Continuing east, the Colo River gorge twists sharply in several directions, dissecting the sandstone plateau like a writhing, convulsing snake. It then enters a gargantuan amphitheatre at the intersection with Wollemi Creek, the longest watercourse in the National Park. Here the flat, sandy flow gives

hairpin bend at the end of the Culoul Range. Several very deep pools are lined by cliffs that descend directly into the water, thus we were forced up high over a series of ledges. We cooked lunch on the sandy banks of a glorious pool before awaiting the cooler evening temperatures for the steep climb out. At about grid reference 696244 on the *Six Brothers* 1:25 000 topographical map, a walking track heads up the steep slope to a car park at the end of the Grassy Hill Track. Fortunately, we knew the way as

Sven had been down there many times; however, if no one in your party has been there before it is a good idea to familiarise yourselves with the largely indistinguishable exit point when you drop off the car.

Once you are on the pad, rock cairns lead the way. The small pad is easy to follow as it weaves up steeply between rock ledges to attain a sharp crest before traversing east. Some tricky ledge scrambling and pack-hauling was necessary as we approached the top, the very last obstacle on this walk. Once over the rim, a faint pad contours right to a rock platform with superb views over the amphitheatre, dominated by Wollemi Creek's hairpin bend.

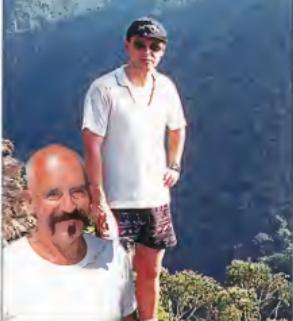
With the end of the year only a few hours away, we finished our films on this ledge, as well as the rest of our snack food. Also exhausted was the supply of superlatives to describe the harsh, enigmatic, yet somehow

Tyrone Thomas

(in the foreground) is the best-selling author of 12 bushwalking guides including *120 Walks in Victoria*, about to be published in its eighth edition. He has walked all over the world for 35 years and now lives at Mt Macedon outside Melbourne, where he pursues gardening and writing interests.

Sven Klinge

is the author of a number of outdoors publications that cover subjects ranging from walking and mountain biking to camping. His photographs have appeared in numerous publications from advertising brochures to coffee-table book pictorials. He lives in Sydney and divides his time between accounting, computer consulting and further writing pursuits.



regal ambience generated within the walls of the gorge. It is possible for walkers to continue downstream for another week, exiting at various spots such as Canoe Creek, Bob Turners Track, Tootie Creek, and the Colo–Merloc camping area but the week spent in the heart of the Wollemi had given the three of us enough memories to satisfy us for...who knows how long?

We turned our backs on the timeless Colo and followed the cairns to the Grassy Hill (Culoul Range) fire track an hour to the east. As it turned out, it was only a matter of months before the Wollemi lured us back again...and again. 

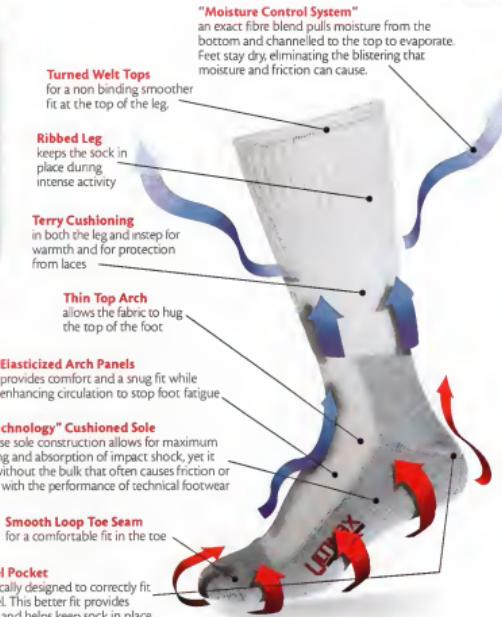
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We don't just **sell** boots, we **fit** them!

Wild told you

See walking-boot survey, *Wild* no 28, 1988, pages 61-65

“ While conducting this survey, I noticed distinct differences between shops. Ajays Snow Country Sports at Heathmont in Melbourne took a particularly thorough line. Staff measure customers' feet with a sizing gauge, which I hadn't seen since being fitted for school shoes. Once this is done, they make a visual assessment, and are then able to recommend particular boots which would fit the customer well. In fact, they are so confident of their fitting, they offer a 'money back-fit guarantee'. ”

“ Unfortunately, not all shops are so progressive. I couldn't help but wonder whether something as difficult as matching feet to boots should be left in the hands of untrained shop staff. ”

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Rucksacks

Stephen Patrikios buckles up

MANUFACTURERS ARE STRIVING to customise their rucksacks—most produce a variety of harness sizes and shapes so that after a hard day's walking you'll be able to rise with the birds and continue comfortably the next day.

The purpose of this survey is to help you to determine which rucksack may best suit your intended use. The models surveyed are suitable for weekend or extended bushwalks. Note that the packs were not field tested.

A number of manufacturers were unable to participate in this survey. This does not reflect on the quality or effectiveness of their products.

Suitable for

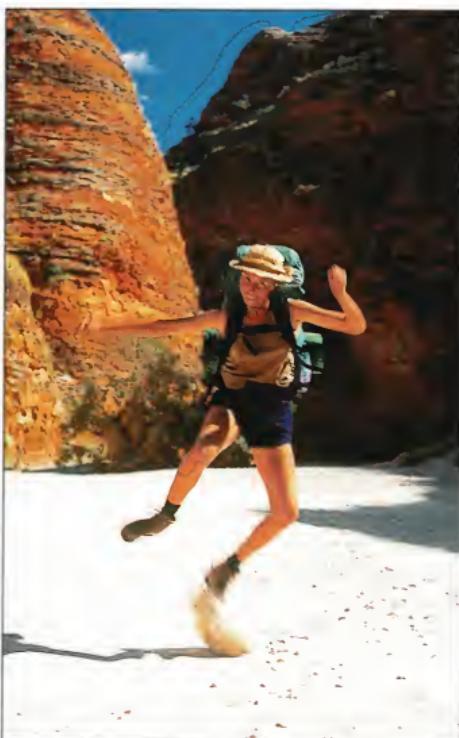
The distinction given here (W, E, and E+) indicates the size of the pack and its ability to withstand heavier loads while still being comfortable to wear. The longer the trip the more food and, possibly, water you will have to carry. These factors as well as the possibility of your load diminishing as the trip progresses should be considered as some larger rucksacks do not function as well when carrying a smaller load.

Volume

Manufacturers use different methods to determine rucksack volumes. If accurate sizing is essential, ask the shop staff to pack the rucksack with the same quantity of gear as that with which you would go bush. When I travel I take the minimum—my motto is: light and small. (Please refer to our survey of day-and-a-half packs in *Wild* no 75 if you are looking for a smaller pack.)

Weight

The weights of the rucksacks in this survey have been supplied by the manufacturers. Those given refer to the lightest and heaviest rucksacks in that manufacturer's range. If the rucksack comes in only two volumes, the weights refer to each size.



Jumping for joy. A comfortable, well-adjusted rucksack makes all the difference on a bushwalk. Stephen Hall

Back lengths available

Some packs come in one volume but have two harness sizes. This can be handy if you are tall but only want a rucksack with small volume.

Main material

The old, faithful 12-ounce rucksack canvas is now being modified to keep pace with new technologies. The materials are becoming lighter, stronger and faster (well, maybe only the red ones). Polyester is blended with

canvas to prevent tearing as you forge through a patch of lantana and new waterproofing agents ensure that your gear stays drier for longer.

Internal compartments

All rucksacks in this survey have either one or two compartments. If access is a high priority for you, a two-compartment rucksack may be the best option. A removable partition usually divides the rucksack into its separate sections.

Harness

This should be one of the most important factors when choosing the best rucksack for your needs. With the amount of individual harness modification available, perhaps your body requires something different if the rucksack still doesn't feel right.

Some of the harness systems in this survey seem a little complex at first but the shop assistant should be able to fit your rucksack so that only minor adjustments are necessary later. Some harness systems can be adjusted while still on your back although this may need to be done in the presence of a friend to ensure the best fit. The bullet rating reflects the comfort and the construction of the harness.

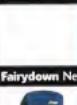
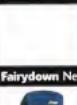
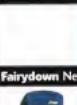
Durability

This rating is an estimate of the life expectancy of the pack with regular use. Some manufacturers are steering away from the heavier reinforced canvas and use lighter synthetics. Always remember where you will mainly use the rucksack and do not go for something because it looks or feels 'techo'.

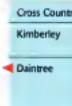
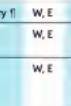
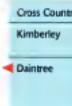
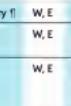
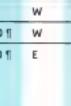
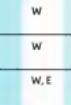
Water resistance

This will depend on the type of material used, the placement of zippers, and the overall design. If the rucksack has sag points when it is partially full, this may contribute to leakage. The method used to stitch the rucksack together is important as seams are

Rucksacks

			Suitable for	Volume, litres	Weight, grams	Back lengths available	Main material	Internal compartments	Harness	Durability	Water resistance	Value for money	Comments	Approx. \$
Adventure Designs/One Planet Australia														
	Stint #	W	65, 75	2000, 2200	2	Canvas	1	***	***½	***½	***½	Simple but functional	275	
	Styx #	W, E	65, 75	2200, 2400	2	Canvas	1	***	***½	***½	***½	As above	305	
	Expedition *	E+	80, 90	2800, 3000	2	Canvas	2	****	***½	***½	****	Practical and comfortable	455	
	Caprice * §	W, E	65	2700	1	Canvas	1	****	***½	***½	****	As above	470	
Arcteryx Canada														
	Bora 70	W, E	70	2770	2	Textured nylon	1	****	***½	***½	***½	High-tech pack that is streamlined, functional and very comfortable	630	
	Bora 80	W, E+	80	3100	2	As above	2	****	***½	***½	***½	As above	700	
Berghaus Korea														
	Pulsar **	W	65	1600, 1650	1	Textured nylon	1	***	****	***½	***½	Excellent for weekend trips. Simple and robust. Women's version has two internal compartments	190	
	Voyager ** †	W, E	60, 75	2100, 2200	2	As above	2	***	***	***	***½	Simple and robust	200	
Cactus New Zealand														
	Deepwinter	W	55-60	1540	3	Textured nylon	1	***½	****	***	***	Hardy and practical	320	
	Hector	W, E	65-69	1700	3	Canvas	1	***½	***½	***½	***½	Streamlined with good front pocket	360	
Fairydown New Zealand														
	Endeavour **	W, E+	65, 70, 75	2400-2600	2	Canvas	2	***	***½	***	***	Has four adjustable, external pockets	450	
	Phoenix ** † §	E+	80, 85, 90	2600-2800	2	Canvas	2	***	***½	***	***	As above	470	
Kathmandu Vietnam														
	Llama	W, E	65, 70	1800, 2000	2	Textured nylon	1	***½	****	****	***	Pocket in hip-belt	380	
	Alpaca	E+	75, 80	2200, 2400	2	As above	2	***½	****	****	***	Simple but functional	420	
Macpac New Zealand														
	Esprit §	W, E+	70	2200	1	Canvas	2	***½	***½	***½	***½	Lid doesn't compress very far. Good pocket design	400	
	Kakapo	E+	70, 75	2200, 2300	2	Canvas	2	***	***½	***½	***½	As above	400	
	Cascade **	E+	85-95	2500-2600	4	Canvas	2	****	***½	***½	***½	As above. Special harness system	530	
Mountain Designs Australia														
	Main Range	W, E	65, 75	2900, 3100	2	Canvas	2	****	***½	***½	***½	Excellent harness with great lumbar support	400	
	Ducane	E+	70, 80	3000, 3200	2	Canvas	1	****	***½	***½	***	As above. Requires additional module for good compression	440	
	Cirque	E+	70, 80	3200, 3400	2	Canvas	2	****	***½	***½	***	As above	470	
Osprey USA														
	Finesse Pro	W, E	49, 52	2000, 2100	2	Textured nylon	1	****	***½	***½	***	Has a special harness, and great compression	595	
	Iota §	W, E	75, 79	2900, 3000	2	As above	2	****	***½	***½	***	As above.	895	
	Xenith Pro	E+	95, 123	3400, 3500	2	As above	2	****	***½	***½	***	As above. A 'packhorse' with expanding side panels and high-tech fabric	1190	

Rucksacks continued

		Suitable for	Volume, litres	Weight, grams	Back insights available	Main material	Internal compartments	Harness	Durability	Water resistance	Value for money	Comments	Approx. price, \$
Paddy Pallin Australia													
	Federation	E+	90	2400	2	Canvas	1	*****	***½	***½	***½	Excellent for extended trips. Has a big front pocket with good access	460
	Kanangra	W, E	70	2800	2	Canvas	2	*****	***½	***½	***½	Functional and comfortable. Good design features, including a big front pocket with easy access	480
	Kimberley §	W, E	70	2600	1	Canvas	2	*****	***½	***½	***½	As above	480
Snowgum Vietnam													
	Hiker I †	W, E	65, 75	2450, 2550	2	Textured nylon	1	***	****	***	***	Simple and robust	250
	Hiker II †	W, E	65, 75	2550, 2650	2	As above	2	***	****	***	***	Simple and functional	270
	Pelion (Australia)	W, E	65, 75	2200, 2400	2	Canvas	1	***	***½	***½	***½	Simple and robust	300
Summit Australia													
	Cross Country †	W, E	50, 55, 60	1700–2200	3	Canvas	1	*****	***½	***½	***	Excellent quality	340
	Kimberley	W, E	55, 65, 70, 80	1800–2300	4	Canvas	1	*****	***½	***½	***	As above	405
	Daintree	W, E	55, 65	2000, 2250	2	Canvas	2	*****	***½	***½	***	As above	420
Tatonka Vietnam													
	Walker 40 †	W	48	1350	1	Textured nylon	1	***½	***	***	***	Inexpensive	150
	Kimberley 50 †	W	56	2300	1	As above	2	***	***	***	***	Simple and economical	270
	Kimberley 70 †	E	78	2350	1	As above	2	***	***	***	***	As above	290
Vango China													
	Sherpa †	W	55, 60+, 65, 75	1600–1750	4	Polyester	2	***	***½	***	***	The price given is for the 60+ litre pack	125
	Punori	W	65, 70, 70+, 75	2300–2700	4	Nylon	2	***	***½	***	***	The price given is for the 65 litre pack	180
	Denali †	W, E	70+, 75	2600, 2700	2	Nylon	2	***½	***½	***	***	Interesting harness. The price given is for the 70+ litre pack	245

● poor ●● average ●●● good ●●●● excellent Suitable for: Extended trips of up to five days, E= Extended trips of up to and more than five days, Weekend trips Weight: Where a range of three or more volumes are available, the weights given are for the lightest and heaviest packs, respectively # Adventure Designs and * One Planet rucksacks are manufactured by Adventure One. Four products are included to fairly represent these two brands § women's rucksack ** women's version available ¶ not seen by author ¶ not seen by referee Prices may vary from 1 July. The country listed after the manufacturer/brand name is the country in which the products are made

Buy right

Adjustments

Shop staff should be able to explain how to adjust the pack so that you know how to fine-tune it. Ask about the benefits of reshaping the aluminium bars for your body type.

Webbing and buckles

Remember that components will move and loosen after a time. Ask where this is most likely to occur and how it may be avoided. The quality of the webbing is usually reflected in the price.

Design

External compression-straps add to the comfort of the pack. If the rucksack is partially packed these straps ensure that nothing moves around inside it. Some rucksacks require additional strap-on modules (specialised accessories such as snowboard attachments, day

packs, and crampon shock-cords) for good compression.

Size

Make sure that the rucksack isn't too long for your back. If you want to be comfortable while carrying a load, select the model that fits best, not the one that will carry your TV.

Water

External water-bottle pockets are becoming a standard design feature on some rucksacks. Make sure that they do not hinder your movement, and test to see how easy they are to reach.

Comfort

Wander around the shop with a loaded pack. Check that the shoulder-straps aren't rubbing on your neck and that the pack isn't forcing your body into an unnatural position.

often points of leakage. If you must walk in the pouring rain, a garbage bag will be handy.

Value for money

With the variety of rucksacks on the market it may be difficult to select the right one. The rucksack with the highest price tag might feel most comfortable but if your intended use does not warrant four ice-axe loops or the toughest material known to man, perhaps you should select a model of simple design. Having a rucksack with more straps to pull doesn't mean they won't get caught on a vine as you make your way to camp! ☺

Stephen Patrikios has always enjoyed experiencing nature in her many moods. His passion for the cold leads him to seek the white stuff whenever the opportunity arises. An avid climber and outdoors enthusiast, the search keeps him walking the lesser-travelled track.

This survey was referred by Stephen Curtin.

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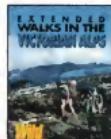
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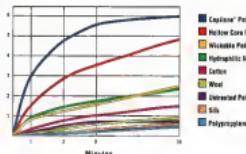
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Water filters and purifiers

Richard King does some pumping to save you from the stomach pump

IT IS A DARK AND STORMY NIGHT. YOU LOOK at your watch, it's 3 am and you realise what just woke you—the call of nature (sloppy style). If this sounds familiar read on...

At first glance water filters and purifiers seem to be horrendously complicated; the sales pitches of companies which sell domestic water filters exacerbate the impression of complexity. In water that the average outdoors type will consume, the three main contaminants are:

1. Protozoa

These are the largest of the water-borne pathogens (agents causing diseases), ranging

Buy right

- Decide on the size of filter required. Smaller units are only good for one to two people.
- You may end up buying water-bottles to suit your filter/purifier—rather than buying a filter to suit your water-bottles.
- Make sure that you are comfortable and happy with the filter's size, weight, complexity and sturdiness for your intended use.
- Most manufacturers haven't a large presence in remote areas of either Australia or other parts of the globe. You will need to carry spare filter cartridges. Katadyn ceramic filter users may not need a spare cartridge on short trips if the filter is fairly new.
- Pump some water with your first choice before purchase—you may be surprised how much force is needed to pump some filters.
- The addition of a chemical to the water (making the filter a purifier) may not be desirable (the microbiologist who checked this article prefers undosed water). In a high-risk environment, tablets can be manually added after the water is filtered if the unit does not do this automatically.
- All the filters surveyed will give safe drinking-water provided the instructions of the manufacturer are followed and, if required, the water is dosed with tablets. PUR's iodine resin will outlast the filter by a large measure—the filter will be totally clogged and will require replacement before the iodine resin is exhausted.
- Ask lots of questions—PUR runs training nights for shop counter staff.
- Look for a prefilter with a float (Sweet-Water's five-micron prefilter is a good example).
- Are new and old components interchangeable—will you be able to obtain parts five years from now?



Is this water safe to drink? Grant Dixon

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in size from 2 to 15 microns (one micron is one-millionth of a metre). They are parasitic cysts, and include:

- Giardia lamblia—characterised by diarrhoea usually lasting one week or longer,

with some or all of the following: fatigue, flatulence, abdominal cramps, bloating. It can be treated with prescription drugs. 8 microns (the protozoa pass through a filter with a pore size of 5 microns)

• Cryptosporidium parvum—symptoms similar to those of giardia lamblia but with a slight fever. There isn't a cure, and it will usually pass in seven to ten days. 4 microns (the protozoa pass through a filter with a pore size of 3 microns)

• Entamoeba histolytica—causes amoebic dysentery. Symptoms include abdominal cramps, diarrhoea, and possibly bloody stools. Lasting from a week to several months. 5 microns

Tips for use

- All the units have a means of determining when the filter needs replacement—understand and use this.
- Try to filter only clear water—let the water stand and the matter settle before filtering, and draw water from near the surface. Using treatment tablets to clear the water may work but is not the recommended way of doing things.
- Using a coffee filter as a prefilter works well, and will increase the life of your filter.
- Be aware of pressure limits on filter seals—as the filter clogs, more force will be required to operate the unit. This increased force can cause 'blow-by' of the seals, resulting in contaminated water bypassing the filter.
- Half-life of water in your water-bottle... Your water-bottle will have bacteria in it, and they will breed over time—after three to four days your water may be very contaminated. Standard operating procedure in the armed forces is to filter water for each day's needs, on the day. If this is not feasible add an inhibitor tablet to the filtered water; this slows down microbiological action.
- The length of contact time (the time between adding the chemical and when the water is safe to drink) for chemical treatments varies depending on dose, water temperature, contamination, and so on. Read the instructions and use them.

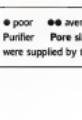
2. Bacteria

They are smaller than protozoa, and include:

- Escherichia coli—characterised by diarrhoea. 0.5 micron
- Shigella—causes dysentery. 0.4 micron
- Campylobacter—causes diarrhoea, fever, vomiting. 0.2 micron
- Salmonella—causes typhoid. 0.6 micron

All are transmitted by a faecal/oral path—water is one issue, but infection from food is far more common, thus your hygiene

Water filters and purifiers

		Use	Weight, grams	Unit	Pore size, microns	Filter type	Cartridge capacity, litres	Cartridge replacement cost, £	Durability	Pusability	Performance	Maintenance	Value for money	Comments	Approx. £ price, £
Katadyn Switzerland www.katadyn.ch															
	Combi	CT, CB	580	M	0.2	As above, plus activated carbon pretreatment	Up to 50 000	150	•••	•••	•••	•••	••	Good for travelling and occasional bushwalking	300
	Pocket Filter	T, FB	520	M	0.2	Silver-impregnated ceramic	Up to 50 000	250	••••	••••	••••	•••	•••	Very versatile and virtually bombproof. Can be hard work	475
	Handpump filter, Type KFT	T	4908	M	0.2	As above	Up to 100 000	120	••••	•	••••½	••••	••	This is by far the best water filter for large groups and commercial operations	1750
MSR USA www.msrgroup.com															
	MiniWorks	FB	456	M	0.3	Ceramic	na	80	•••	•••	•••	•••	•••	Good value for money	140
PUR USA www.purwater.com															
	Hiker	FB	310	M	0.3	Glass fibre	400 plus	60	•••	•••	•••	•••	•••	Excellent for one or two people—just don't sit on it!	130
	Voyageur	T, FB	310	P	0.3	Glass fibre plus 'Trek' iodine resin core	400 plus	85	•••	•••	••••	•••	•••	Interchangeable cartridge with Hiker	160
	Scout	T, FB	395	P	0.3	As above	400 plus	90	•••	•••	••••	•••	•••	Solid. Good prefilter	190
SweetWater USA www.cascadedesigns.com															
	WalkAbout	CT	260	M	0.2	Proprietary system based on a ceramic filter	About 400	55	•••	•••	•••	•••	•••	The cheapest and lightest model surveyed. Has bottle adaptor, and pressure relief valve	100
	Guardian	FB	320	M	0.2	As above. Has activated carbon outer	About 800	90	•••	•••	•••	••••	••••	Easy to use and maintain in the field. Pressure relief valve is a good design feature that might drive you nuts when it sprays water in your face	140

• poor •• average ••• good •••• excellent Use: CB casual bushwalking, CT casual travel, FB frequent bushwalking, Trekking Weights were supplied by the manufacturers Unit: Microfilter, Purifier Pore size applies to the filter. The figures were supplied by the manufacturers Cartridge capacity depends on the quality of water used and on whether the cartridge can be cleaned. The figures were supplied by the manufacturers Prices may vary from 1 July na not available The country listed after the manufacturer/brand name is the country in which the products are made

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Alternative filtration systems

Not all possible types of water filters have been surveyed. Other kinds are considered here; most have intended applications different from bushwalking use, thus they have not been included in the survey.

Water-bottle filters

Units such as the Bota Outback filtration system (RRP \$50), PentaPure's Sport purifying bottle (RRP \$100), and Safe Water's Expedition and Pro bottles (RRP \$120 and \$110, respectively) all filter to between one and two microns. This will remove most protozoa, but bacteria and viruses will pass through. In a high-risk environment, the water must be dosed with chemicals. It is important to realise that the domestic water-supply you use every day (especially tank water) is also contaminated with viruses and bacteria; however, the dose is so small that your body easily deals with it. These types of units are ideal for day-trips as they weigh very little and may provide extra peace of mind when taking water from sources that are basically considered OK, such as the water tanks at a High Country hut. Cross-contamination of the mouth-piece is a potential issue unless the user is extremely careful.

Siphon and gravity-feed systems

Katadyn is the main supplier of these systems. They are more fragile than pump-action microfilters, have a slower production rate (litres/hour) and can't be transported while filtering water. The best aspect of these systems is that they do not require effort to produce filtered water. They are microfilters and, like all the systems discussed, are susceptible to clogging if dirty water is used; with these systems it is also very difficult to prefilter the water. Again, most are filters, and will require the water to be dosed with a chemical to provide a purifier level of performance. These units are ideal for fixed-base camping.

Traditional boiling, or purification chemical dosing

Boiling is a very effective method. It is best to boil the water for ten minutes; the problem is that it requires large amounts of fuel—either provided and carried by you, or from the nearby environment. Dosing unfiltered water with a chemical means that you are ingesting high concentrations of the chemical used, and often the water still looks dirty with floaters in it—safe, but not good for one's appetite!

Prices may vary from 1 July.

habits and those of your companions are probably more important.

3. Viruses

The smallest of the water-borne pathogens. At present there is only symptomatic treatment for the virus. Provided that you are healthy, viruses are not usually life threatening, just uncomfortable. However, Hepatitis E, which is common in developing countries, has a 20–30 per cent mortality rate in pregnant women. Common viruses include:

- Rotavirus
- Hepatitis A, B, and E
- Meningitis
- Norwalk virus

Transmission is by the faecal/oral infection path. The problem is that viruses are very small, often sub 0.020 micron, thus filtration is impractical. Fortunately, viruses are easily killed (deactivated—for the purist) by boiling, and by iodine- or chlorine treatment.

The standards by which the products are compared are among the broadest areas of contention (marketing).

PUR uses a logarithmic scale meaning that, for example, 99,9999 per cent of bacteria are stopped, or one in 1 000 000 bacteria gets through. SweetWater and MSR also use a logarithmic scale.

Katadyn uses a scale of 'colony forming units' for bacteria counts. This is the unit of measure most municipal water authorities use. The quoted external figure for Katadyn is 20 colony forming units/millilitre. For quality control, Katadyn tests 40 filters out of a manufacturing batch of 700; if three or more of the filters return over five colony forming units/millilitre, the whole batch is rejected.

What this means is that there isn't an easy way for the consumer to compare the different products. In addition, all the manufacturers claim that their products meet or exceed Environment Protection Authority standards—this usually means US EPA standards as Australia doesn't have any that are strictly applicable. All the products surveyed will remove virtually all protozoa and bacteria from the water, thus this is not a major point of differentiation between the products.

Another common problem faced by the consumer: What is the difference between a microfilter and a purifier? A microfilter is what the name suggests; it filters out things in the water. A purifier filters the water and then doses the liquid with a chemical to kill or deactivate any organisms that have managed to get past the filter stage.

A filter can produce the same effect as a purifier if the user adds a chemical tablet or drops to the filtered water, usually iodine or chlorine. It is standard operating procedure in the armed forces to add purification tablets to the water *after* it has been filtered. This is done to maximise the exposure of any pathogens to the chemical. PUR claims that the amount of iodine released by its purifier system is sub-

stantially less than by any other method, and that one litre of its purified water contains the same amount of iodine as one prawn.

Pore size

The size of particle (average size) that is stopped by the filter in microns (a human hair is between 50 and 150 microns).

Filter type

The material of which the filter is made. Ceramic filters are like a honeycomb; they tend to clog on the surface and can be scraped clean many times before they are worn away. They are also relatively fragile. Glass-fibre filters are like strands of uncooked spaghetti all lined up together; this allows good flow rates, and flexibility. They clog less frequently than ceramics but are harder to clean when they do clog. Activated carbon elements remove chemicals and other inert contaminants. Their published life spans are about 400 litres; 800 litres for SweetWater's Guardian.

Cartridge capacity

How much water can the filter be expected to produce before it is no longer feasible to use it; this depends greatly on the clarity of the water used. Filters must be cleaned very carefully to last their published life.

Durability

Will the unit survive being sat on, or stood on?

Portability

This is a function of weight, size, durability, shape, and the number of parts needed.

Performance

Essentially, is the output worth the effort? Susceptibility to clogging, ease of use—males may find the Katadyn units easier to use than females due to the need to direct the output stream into the neck of a water-bottle!

Maintenance

Factors such as ease of cleaning, and risk of cross-contamination while cleaning were considered.

Value for money

Very subjective, based on durability, user friendliness, cost, intended use and verifiability.

Richard King lives (suffers!) in Melbourne. An engineer, he has spent extensive time in remote parts of Australia, and Asia, using water filters as a normal part of life.

This survey was refereed by Michael Hampton.

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Phoenix rising

In recent years Rick White (see his profile in *Wild* no 18) has lost control of the well-known manufacturing, wholesale and retail chain Mountain Designs, has been close to bankruptcy, faced a life-threatening illness (the rare muscle disease inclusion body myositis, for which there is no known cure) and has now been made redundant. Lesser mortals would have sunk without trace under such burdens. White, however, is made of sterner stuff.

The creator of the Mountain Designs brand made his first sleeping-bag 25 years ago and is widely acknowledged as the person principally responsible for the Australian outdoors equipment industry being where it is today. His Australian innovations include the introduction of Ripstop nylon, Gore-Tex sleeping-bags, mummy designs and down of better quality. One of Australia's most distinguished climbers, he has a long list of major first ascents and first Australian ascents to his name ranging from California's Yosemite Valley to Patagonia and the Himalayas.

Now, after an eight-year absence from the outdoors industry, White is back in business. The avowed aim of his **Rick White Signature Series** is 'to manufacture the best down products in the world'. As White puts it, such an aim necessitates starting with the best available down. White explains: 'As far as I am aware this is sticky Siberian goose down, with a guaranteed loft of over 800 [cubic] inches/ounce. It is rare and expensive, being about three times the price of the best down used by local manufacturers. It is not a by-product of the food industry like all other locally used down, but is hand collected from mature, breeding geese.' White's sleeping-bags and down clothing are individually made to the customer's own measurements and requirements. The customer selects the style, colours, fabric and fill weight. All bags are hot cut, and all major seams double sewn. Not surprisingly, White's products aren't cheap, but if you have unusually rigorous requirements, or are merely an inveterate gear freak, his Signature Series may be just what you want.

Another interesting start-up in Australian outdoors equipment manufacturing is **Makalu**. Based in the Victorian Alps, Makalu seeks to produce quality **mountain clothing** designed for skiers, mountaineers, mountain travellers and others; at a reasonable price. The company is the brainchild of experienced and well-travelled XCD skier and trekker Belinda Rees. Its tough, no-nonsense products have been developed with a leading Nepalese expedition outfitter and are manufactured in Nepal. Makalu (named after the world's fifth-highest peak and the home village of our extended family in Nepal) claims that in purchasing a Makalu product you support the local economy in Nepal. Makalu explains its attractive prices: 'What you won't find on our mountain jackets and pants are expensive "name brand" fabric labels. By stepping outside the three-ring circus of product marketing and international advertising we can bring you the same fabrics at a fraction of the cost.'

Women's business

According to the Australian distributor of the **Keeper**—a **feminine hygiene product** new to the Australian market—the average woman throws away about



15 000 pads or tampons in her life. In Australia and New Zealand alone, 700 million tampons and one billion pads are disposed of each year. The Keeper is said to be an easy-to-use, environmentally and economically friendly alternative to tampons and pads.

Made in the USA, the Keeper is a small, soft rubber cup worn internally like a tampon to collect menstrual blood. It holds up to 30 millilitres and can be worn for up to eight hours at a time without emptying. The cup is easily inserted by folding it vertically and has a life expectancy of at least ten years. According to the manufacturer, the Keeper is as hygienic as other menstrual products provided that basic hygiene rules are followed. It is listed with the Therapeutic Goods Administration in Australia. For more information, phone (02) 9976 5560. RRP \$58.

The Keeper is an environmentally friendly feminine hygiene product designed to be an alternative to tampons and pads. It is new to the Australian market.

Gumboot diplomacy

Melbourne **outdoors clothing** manufacturer **Wilderness Wear** seems unable to stop pulling off PR coups that are the envy of the Australian outdoors industry. First it scored with the wonderful story of how the timely dispatch of its products narrowly averted insurrection in the steaming jungles of French Guiana (see *Equipment*, *Wild* no 70). Now it has trumped that one with huge, national front-page publicity for its products after supplying octogenarian twin sisters Toni Mooy Hurley and Adélie Hurley with *Wilderness Wear* clothing. These amazing

ladies unexpectedly turned out to be the daughters of Shackleton expedition photographer Frank Hurley and were on their way to Antarctica to follow in his adventurous footsteps to a massive fanfare of publicity! On their return the sisters wrote to the company with glowing endorsements of its products—so easy and quick to get into and out of and also, to our delight, the pants had shaped knees! We had previously tried Ibrand XI outfits but no shaped knees and we couldn't even bend down to put our gumboots on.'

sydney Morning Herald

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• OCTOGENARIAN TWINS – ANTARCTIC JOURNEY

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Fab(ulous)rics

Australia's outdoors clothing market is becoming increasingly like its big brother in the USA and rucksacks sports enthusiasts have a vast choice of specialist outdoors clothing. Manufacturers are now cutting their clothing from fabrics specifically designed for outdoors enthusiasts. These new fabrics make a big difference to comfort and warmth on a foray outdoors.

Sportif USA has a new range of clothing made from **Taslan nylon** and **Supplex Ripstop nylon**. Both fabrics are said to be durable and quick to dry. Special treatments give them UV protection and make the garments comfortable in hot or humid conditions. (Note that harmful rays can penetrate many *untreated*, light fabrics.) Clothing available in these fabrics includes men's pants with zip-off legs, women's shorts and a men's long-sleeved shirt. Distributed by **Outdoor Agencies**; phone (02) 9438 2266. Approximate prices are \$89, \$59 and \$119, respectively.

Hi-Tec's Fibretex is a new lightweight, breathable, water-resistant fabric. Fibretex is woven with Teflon, which stops water from soaking into the garments. If you pour water on to the fabric it forms beads as it would on a waxed car bonnet. The manufacturer claims that the garments are resistant to staining, fading, odour and mould. The Fibretex range includes a unisex, long-



Icebreaker clothing is woven from 'no-itch' merino wool which is said to be twice as fine as traditional lowland wools.

sleeved shirt; men's and women's shorts and pants with zip-off legs. Distributed by **Acier Sportswear**; phone (02) 9565 1761. RRP \$89, \$69 and \$99, respectively.

New Zealand's **Icebreaker** label, known for its chic colours and cuts, has found a niche at the top end of Australia's outdoors market. Icebreaker clothing, which is available from outdoors shops, is made from soft, 'no-itch' merino wool said to be twice

as fine as traditional lowland wools. Icebreaker claims that merino wool is resistant to fire and odour, is tough and durable, machine washable and quick to dry (although not as fast as synthetics). The catch? The cost, of course! A short-sleeved, crew-neck 'T-shirt' retail costs at \$75 and a long-sleeved, zip-necked top costs \$169.

A new, 'cutting edge' sock called **Blister Guard** has been developed in Australia. It is said to reduce blisters, calluses, hot spots and abrasions by 90–100 per cent. The heel, toe and pad of the sock are made of a DuPont Teflon-brand fibre which is said to reduce friction between the sock and the skin. Five styles are available. Distributed by **Stackhouse Sales**. Available from camping and outdoors shops. RRP \$16.95.

New navigational devices

GME Electrophone has announced the release of **Garmin's** smallest handheld **Global Positioning System** (GPS) to date. The **eTrex** is 112 millimetres in height and weighs only 150 grams, which makes it ideal for bushwalking. It has the same 12-channel receiver as more expensive units and will literally fit in the palm of your hand. For more information, phone (02) 9844 6666. RRP \$359.



The Yeoman Group claims that its new 'map mouse' takes data from a hand-held Global Positioning System and electronically reads any map.

A 'map mouse' device for plotting routes on maps has been developed by the UK-based **Yeoman Group**. The **Yeoman XPI** takes data from a hand-held GPS and electronically reads any map to tell you where you are, how far you have to go to reach your destination and when you are likely to arrive. The manufacturer says that anyone used to a computer mouse will find the Yeoman XPI easy to use; it only takes a few seconds to connect the plotter to the GPS receiver and begin to read the map. For more information, visit the Yeoman Group Web site: www.yeomanuk.com

Silva has released the **Silva Alta**, a wrist-watch with a microaltimeter. The watch has a pressure sensor which measures differences in altitude down to one metre. It automatically displays the number of ski runs, descent distances and descent speed. The watch is suitable for mountaineers, skiers and snowboarders. Available from specialist outdoors shops. RRP \$338.

Knick-Knacks

* Canadian manufacturer **Genuine Guide Gear** has developed a unique new **Telemark binding** called **Targa**. The design is simple which means that very little can go wrong while you are on the slopes. Some excellent features and accessories are: The integrated shim gives the bind-



The Targa Telemark binding system has some excellent features and accessories.

ing extra clearance above the snow which results in greater stability and increased leverage and ability to edge; the bindings come with anti-ice plates; and the cable guide is angled so that there is less tip-dive pressure on the ski and therefore better weighting. For more information, phone **Mountain Horizons** on (02) 4456 7027. RRP \$349.

* To coincide with the release of its clothing range in Australia in May, **Arcteryx** has manufactured a new range of **rucksacks**. (See our rucksacks survey on page 67.) The **Bora 30** is an excellent, if expensive, day pack for bushwalking, climbing and skiing. It has a fully adjustable harness system, a sensible number of attachment points and a large back pocket with top- and side access. Available from **MainPeak** and **Patagonia** shops. RRP \$249.

* The **Katadyn Camp Filter** consists of a ten litre Orlieb water-bag with an internal ceramic siphon filter that is said to remove 99.9999 per cent of all bacteria, protozoa and cysts. It can filter a bag of water in two to three hours. The unit is designed to hang from a suspension point such as a tree and, according to the manufacturer, it has a capacity of up to 20 000 litres. The water-bag opens at the top and can be filled straight from a creek or river. Available from outdoors shops. RRP \$135.

* Also from **Katadyn**, the **Micropur Forte** chemical treatment combines silver ions with chlorine to disinfect untreated, clear surface water. The calcium hypochlorite oxidises the particles in the water including micro-organisms, and the silver ions disinfect and preserve the

trix

Trix for treats

Hot gourmet food in the bush!

By Robbo Bennett

One limitation people experience when planning and preparing interesting meals in the bush is due to the difficulty of reheating precooked food. A variety of commercial and home-made 'steamers' are around. These are fine for some applications, for example, when you want moist food. But how would you reheat chicken pieces, pizza slices or croissants without producing a soggy mess?

The answer is simple. There is a fast, easy and inexpensive way to reheat all those treats—and more—just as effectively as though you had humped a 12-volt microwave all the way to your favourite wilderness retreat.

Simply bring your billy to the boil. Keep it on the boil. Take a croissant, as an example. Slice it carefully with a knife, leaving a 'hinge'. Place it in a small oven bag. Do not tie the oven bag. Place the open bag in the boiling water. The bag will 'float' upright quite stably. Any steam from inside the bag will escape readily, ensuring that the croissant does not become soggy. (Do not attempt this process with an ordinary plastic bag!)

Heating takes place as a result of both conduction and radiation. Conduction occurs where the croissant rests against the oven bag, and this means that you might have to turn it once during the process so that it is warmed up evenly. It will take only five minutes or so to warm provided that the billy keeps boiling. (This part of the process entails a little experimentation.)

Once you are satisfied that the croissant is ready, remove it from the oven bag. Fill it with chocolate or jam. Serve with percolated coffee or a cold drink of your choice—chilled in the creek, of course.

Wild welcomes readers' contributions to this section: payment is at our standard rate. Send them to the address at the end of this department.

water from recontamination for up to six months. Micropur Forte does not contain iodine. Purification takes 20–30 minutes, or up to two hours if the water is very cold. A 100 millilitre bottle of Micropur Forte treats 1000 litres of water. RRP \$21. 

Prices may vary from 1 July.

Products (on loan to *Wild*) and/or information about them, including colour slides, are welcome for possible review in this department. Written items should be typed, include recommended retail prices and preferably not exceed 200 words. Send them to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.

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Blood in the forest

For several years, right round Australia, there has been a pattern of ongoing violence and harassment towards environmentalists acting for the forests.

In Victoria there has now been a series of shocking incidents, which include:

- The attempted sabotage of the aircraft of jazz musician Vince Jones, who was vocal about forests, in East Gippsland in June 1994. Steel wool was cut up and placed in the fuel tank.
- The disappearance and presumed death of a protester in Goolengook, East Gippsland, in December 1998.
- The attack on Matt Rees by a logging contractor in the Otways in December 1998, for which the contractor received a suspended gaol sentence (see Green Pages, *Wild* nos 72 and 74).
- The attack on Adrian Whitehead in the Otways in December 1998 (see Green Pages, *Wild* nos 72 and 74).
- A violent attack on a camp of protesters in the Otways in December 1998 (see Green Pages, *Wild* no 74).
- The alleged holding prisoner of several conservationists for five days and nights in the Otways in January 1999 (see Green Pages, *Wild* no 72).
- An attack on protesters at Rileys Ridge in the Otways on 17 February 2000 in which people were assaulted and property was damaged.
- An incident in Goolengook on 21 February 2000. It is alleged that 40 or more loggers from various locations attacked a camp in the forest, and then a vehicle and its occupants on their way to the camp. It is alleged that during this incident a number of people were assaulted; an ambulance was required to attend. Two persons were taken to hospital, and substantial damage was allegedly done, including the wrecking of two vehicles. The police have laid some charges of riot.
- An alleged attack on conservationists by loggers wielding baseball bats and axe-handles at Middle Spur in the Otways on 2 April 2000 (two days after the Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) was signed). Police and ambulance attended; some 20 persons were injured, five being hospitalised.

Conservation groups have called for an inquiry into the violence, for reparation to the victims, and for loggers guilty of violence to be ordered out of the industry.

Conservationists have also pointed the finger at police inaction in relation to violent incidents against them, and police bias against environmentalists.

Meanwhile, conservationists and residents in Apollo Bay in the Otways were shocked by the deliberate severing of the town's power supply on the night of 25 March during the annual Apollo Bay Music Festival. The incident occurred less than a week before the signing of the RFA for western Victoria, and bears the hallmark of previous dirty tricks campaigns against conservationists just before such decisions.

Doctors in Victoria have warned that clearing in the Otways and Wombat Ranges water catchments is a public health risk for residents in Geelong and the other communities affected.

Fly buys



The sites on this postcard were targeted by the Tasmanian Government for helipads. Clockwise from top left: Mt Milner at Bathurst Harbour, Prion Beach, the Central Plateau lakes and the Franklin River. After public opposition, only Mt Milner (the flight path for which is understood to be past the Western Arthurs) is to proceed to the next stage of the planning assessment. The Greens

The problem of aircraft over National Parks and other wilderness areas extends beyond the helicopter tourism proposed for five key places in the heart of Tasmania's World Heritage wilderness reported in Green Pages, *Wild* no 76. A local helicopter operator has applied for a planning permit for scenic helicopter flights over Victoria's Grampians National Park. The local shire declined the application on the grounds that the proposed take-off and landing site breached Environment Protection Authority guidelines concerning operating distances from habitation.

However, conservationists are concerned that the shire only has jurisdiction over the

take-off/landing site. Because air space is a shared responsibility it is likely that high-level political action and cooperation will be required to protect National Parks from the major imposition of air traffic by a few spoiling the enjoyment of so many. At present, there is only Fly Neighbourly's advice provided by Parks Victoria, and compliance is entirely voluntary.

With the matter already seriously affecting users' enjoyment of other important wilderness areas, including the Northern Territory's Kings Canyon and Victoria's Bogong High Plains, helicopter flights over wilderness areas are bound to be an increasingly important issue.

Oz mining companies earn a shameful record

In late January the mine waste storage dam of an Australian-owned gold-mine in Romania overflowed during heavy snow and rain, spilling huge quantities of deadly cyanide into central European rivers. The water supply of 2.5 million people was contaminated and the ecology of the rivers seriously damaged for at least ten years. No rehabilitation fund exists.

In February, in another accident, one tonne of solid cyanide pellets was dropped from a helicopter near the Australian-owned Tolukuma mine in Papua New Guinea. Days

later, the company responsible could not account for 150 kilograms of cyanide which had entered local rivers. Heeding the warning to avoid river water, scared villagers downstream from the spill drank from swamps.

The Mineral Policy Institute's call for enforceable principles and regulations to guide the overseas operations of Australian companies has been supported by the Australian Labor Party, the Democrats and the Greens.

Nina Lansbury

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Win some, lose some

In April the New South Wales Government approved a major (324 000 hectare) expansion to National Parks between Nowra and Narooma, and between the coast and Albury.

National Parks will replace State Forests over some of the most scenic parts of the NSW southern coastline. It also fulfills a vision to establish a continuous belt of protected areas stretching from Victoria to the southern highlands south of Sydney.

However, the decision fails to protect some areas proposed by local communities for conservation and allows logging in wilderness areas in the upper Deua and Tuross Rivers between Cooma and Moruya and the northern end of the Goarabraggandra Wilderness near Tumut.

On the south coast the NSW Government will maintain timber industry supply at existing levels; logging levels in the Tumut area will increase by almost 30 per cent.

Andrew Cox

National Parks; have your say

A White Paper proposing an overhaul to the NSW *National Parks and Wildlife Act* is expected to be released in May or June for about three months of public comment. This has been the first thorough review of the Act since it was passed in 1974.

Clearly there is a need for the legislation to spell out the primacy of nature conservation to rule National Park management and to constrain development pressures. Commercialisation is increasingly driving management decisions as the government looks for creative ways to raise revenue.

This is the chance to ensure that ski resorts are not expanded and new conference centres, restaurants and private access roads are not permitted. The review is an opportunity to ensure that the National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS) remains effective at overseeing the protection of biodiversity in NSW.

AC

Act now

Send your submission to Strategic Policy Division, National Parks & Wildlife Service, PO Box 1967, Hurstville, NSW 2220. State your opposition to increased commercialisation of National Parks, and oppose the further expansion of private accommodation within National Parks. Support the inclusion of a primary objective of nature conservation to apply to all National Parks and nature reserves.

Forests for charcoal

In March the NSW Government rejected a plan to supply trees from the woodlands at Pilliga and Goonoo, north-east of Dubbo, to produce charcoal. The charcoal, to be used to make silicon at a proposed smelter in Lithgow, will now primarily be obtained from State Forests and private land to the east in the New England tablelands and the upper Hunter valley. The government faced strong pressure following a series of public meetings.

While there remains strong opposition to the 160 000 tonnes of native trees required each year to make charcoal, conservation groups are now seeking the permanent protection of Goonoo and parts of Pilliga in new National Parks.

AC

Mt Cripps caves to be mined?

Western Metal Resources Ltd has given notice of an application for an exploration licence covering 29 square kilometres in north-western Tasmania, just 20 kilometres from Cradle Mountain. The company seeks to extract 20 million tonnes of limestone to treat tailings from the Hellyer Mine, scheduled to operate for only another ten years. The operation is then likely to supply other Tasmanian industries. This will greatly affect the important cave and surface karst features of the Mt Cripps region recommended for protection in the Regional Forest Agreement.

The area is one of very few examples of glaciated karst in Tasmania although it is now covered with pristine myrtle forest. It has over 200 caves, also exhibits textbook polygonal karst drainage patterns and contains unique invertebrate cave fauna including many as yet unidentified species. The exploration lease enables the extraction of up to 1000 tonnes of limestone from land extending from the Cradle Mountain link road to the shores of Lake McIntosh, not to mention the damage done from road construction and drilling rigs in the area.

Stephen Buntun

Act now

Write to Tasmanian Premier Jim Bacon, Senator Robert Hill, Greens Member Peg P putt, Tasmanian Shadow Minister for Mining Rene Hidding.

Fraser Island choo choo?

Recently plans were announced to build a light rail system in the north of Fraser Island, Queensland. Ostensibly planned to reduce the number of four-wheel-drive vehicles on

the island, at first glance the project appears to offer enhanced environmental protection to the island's precious ecological systems. However, a closer look suggests that this will not be the case.

Ross Daniel of Friends of the Earth Maryborough says, 'this new project will have a huge impact: it will require a new mooring facility and shift tourists into the northern part of the island. But at the same time, there will be no removal of existing infrastructure, so it really just means that there will be more development on the island, not less.'

For further information, phone the group on (07) 4123 1895.

Royal assent

The NSW Environment Minister has approved the Plan of Management for Royal National Park, bringing heated debate about huts and deer to a conclusion.

The plan, replacing one from 1975, requires the removal of the expanding rusa deer, now numbering over 2000, from the park.

Royal National Park contains more than 200 huts built over 50 years ago. The new plan will require the removal of huts if the original owner is no longer alive. The NPWS intends to rent a small number of huts to the public for overnight stays; regulations will set standards for the upkeep of the remainder. Bonnie Vale huts are to be progressively removed.

The other controversial issue is the plan to prohibit bush camping in the park except at North Era and Uloola Falls.

Copies of the plan are available for \$7.50 from the Royal National Park Visitor Centre; phone (02) 9542 0632.

AC

WOOD-CHIPS

* The *Age* reported on 21 February that according to 1999 statistics **Australia has the worst record in the developed world for land clearing**. It is among the worst five countries in the world for clearing native vegetation having cut down more than half a million hectares last year.

* Melbourne's **Jacki Schirmer** is concerned that many significant **management decisions for Australia's natural environment** have been made using often clearly inadequate techniques (such as through political processes, where 'might is right'). In a postgraduate research project at Oxford University, UK, she intends to review such decisions with the aim, among other things, to develop recommendations for achieving more effective, and more sustainable, resolution of conflict. Independent organisations interested in helping to fund such research should email her at s3032859@student.anu.edu.au

* Many of our most vulnerable ecosystems for communities of native plants and animals are on private land within our agricultural heartlands and close to our

cities. Andrew Bartlett reports that **land-owners can now benefit by donating land for conservation purposes** because of recent changes to the tax law. The landowner obtains tax deductibility over five years or capital gains tax exemption for land left in people's wills.

* Gary Wells reports that **damage in the northern Kosciuszko National Park caused by wild pigs** has rapidly increased in the last three years. He says that the grasses of this area are fragile and is concerned that large parts will suffer erosion as the snows melt in late spring and summer.



John Wamsley, founder and Managing Director of Earth Sanctuaries, with bilbies in his beard. Earth Sanctuaries collection

* Colourful South Australian environmentalist **John Wamsley** has announced plans to open a \$12 million **wildlife sanctuary** at the **You Yangs**, near Geelong, Victoria. The money is being raised by floating a public company, **Earth Sanctuaries**, on the stock exchange in May. Due to open in 2002, the proposed park includes tourism facilities and accommodation.

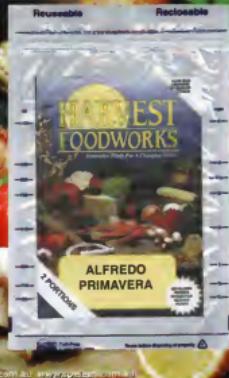
* In March Aboriginal and environmental representatives stated that the **Regional Forest Agreements** for Gippsland and western Victoria could be illegal under the *Native Title Act* and the *Anti-Discrimination Act*. Friends of the Earth stated that these agreements, as well as those for East Gippsland, Tasmania, the Central Highlands and Victoria's north east, may be illegal because the government officials negotiating the process haven't properly conferred with Aboriginal elders and native title claimants of those areas.

Readers' contributions to this department, including colour slides, are welcome. Typed items of less than 200 words are more likely to be printed. Send them to the Editor, Wild, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.

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Treseder!

Biography of the baron of breakneck bush brinkmanship

Treseder: Man of Adventure

by Martin Long (New Holland, 1999, RRP \$24.95).

Peter Treseder is a hard man to pin down. He's always on the move. Not only that, Treseder keeps reinventing the impossible. One minute he's slashing 'tiger walking' times in the Blue Mountains, the next he's paddling a kayak across Bass Strait, dashing across the desert or hauling his way to the South Pole.

Had Treseder directed his energies into a single pursuit it might be easier to get a fix on the man—if he'd taken up swimming the 1500 metres he would no doubt have his name on milk cartons by now. Instead, he has carved out his own path of outdoors zeal.

This highly readable biography carefully traces Treseder's career from his days as a Boy Scout in Sydney's northern bushy outskirts to the headlong rush of extreme adventures that he has crammed into the past two decades.

Based on extensive interviews, Martin Long brings to the surface many telling aspects of Treseder's background and character. While the contrast between his sober, suburban lifestyle and the brinkmanship of his expeditions remains, the book rounds out the portrait with anecdotes that reveal a complex and occasionally playful personality. At the same time Long does not shy away from the price that Treseder pays for his stiff-lipped determination, be that the strain on his young family, difficulties with expedition companions or the emotional 'distance' in his own make-up.

Although many of the wilderness locations mentioned will be familiar to *Wild* readers, the sheer number of trips entailed and their breakneck pace makes it hard to connect with the nature of Treseder's day-to-day experiences. Hundreds of kilometres whiz past in a single sentence. Apart from vividly recounted incidents, including confrontations with crocodiles on Cape York and pirates in the Timor Sea, the journeys themselves become a blur.

As a result, *Treseder: Man of Adventure* reads as an entertaining and often inspirational digest of highlights rather than an engrossing life story. And while anybody who understands the travails of the bush cannot help but be in awe of Treseder's achieve-

ments, at the end of it all you are left wondering about his need for speed.
Quentin Chester

Classic Tramping in New Zealand

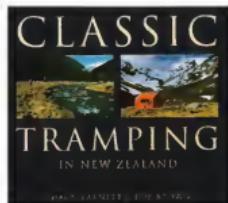
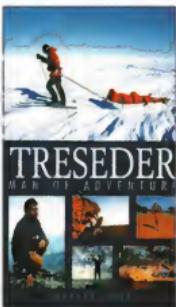
by Shaun Barnett and Rob Brown (Craig Potton Publishing, 1999, RRP \$33.15 (soft cover), \$41.45 (hard cover)).

This beautiful book is well produced and packed with great photographs taken on the New Zealand walks it describes. Bushwalking in New Zealand is known as 'tramping' and anyone who has bushwalked in Tasmania or in the Australian Alps will no doubt find New Zealand a great place for the sport.

The two authors, who are also the principal photographers, have a deep affection for the country they describe. This is apparent from the text as well as from the magnificent photos. The images are not mere snaps

but are lovingly composed and indicate that the photographers must have had long waits for the right light.

The walks described are not the designated and well-known 'Great Walks' such as the



Milford and Routeburn Tracks (those are treated in an earlier volume by the same publisher) but all certainly fit the description of being 'classic tramps'. The 12 trips are a mixture from the North and South Islands. They include some that are probably known to Australian bushwalking visitors such as the Dusky Track in Fiordland. But also included are many trips that are probably less familiar such as to the spectacular Dragons Teeth in north-west Nelson.

Of the 12 walks described, I have completed five. The photos of these walks make

me want to go back to New Zealand and do them again. The remaining walks look just as inviting. The book is attractively laid out and the photographs are well printed. It is strongly recommended.

David Noble

Australian Bush Survival Skills

by Kevin Casey (Kimberley Publications, 2000, RRP \$22.70).

This is a sensible and useful guide for those who visit wild places. It caters not only for the bushwalker but also for those driving in remote places such as northern and central Australia, and for people in boats.

In the 'Finding your way' chapter the treatment of navigating with a map and compass is good but there is nothing on using Global Positioning System devices. In addition, the use of EPIRBs (emergency position-indicating radio beacon units) is only given scant treatment.

The information in this book is certainly correct and I could not find fault with any of it. However, when I looked for some of the things I do when lighting a fire in wet conditions in the Blue Mountains—such as using small bits of tyre inner tube as a fire starter and looking for dry tinder under fallen logs—I could not find these very practical suggestions. The information the book offers is quite good nevertheless and most will gain some useful tips from it.

DN

Healthy Travel series (Australia, New Zealand & the Pacific; Asia & India; Central & South America; Africa)

by Isabelle Young (Lonely Planet, 2000, RRP \$8.95 each).

This well-researched and concisely written series of books provides up-to-date and relevant medical advice to travellers planning their trips and to those already on the move. Although loca-



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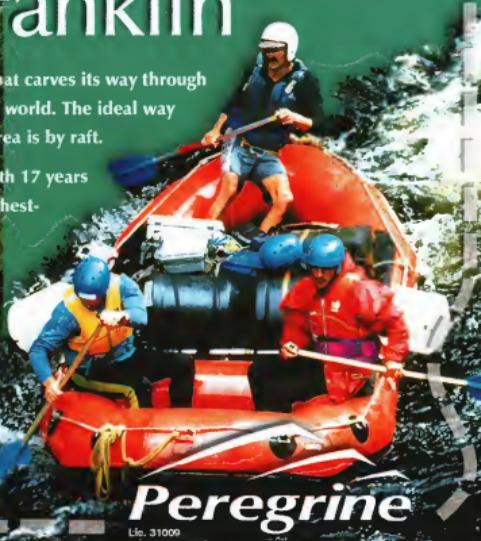
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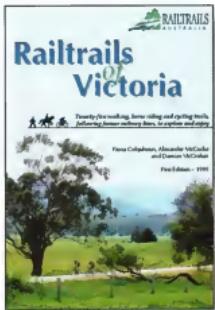
tion specific, the books contain a great deal of similar information and, for this reason, most travellers would probably need to purchase only one. The books, however, contain plenty of relevant local information as well as details of alternative and traditional medicine of the area, which can make for interesting reading and even practice. Overall, the books are a compact, useful reference that offer good value for money.

Richard Kjar

Railtrails of Victoria

by Fiona Colquhoun, Alexander Mc Cooke & Damian McCrohan (Railtrails Australia, 1999, RRP \$19.95).

Covering 25 closed railway lines, this guide provides a unique link with our past. Railway formations have wide surfaces and gentle grades and the routes are described as being suitable for bicycle riding, horse-riding and walking. Some of the described routes are rough and only suitable for bushwalkers.



Most of the descriptions are complemented by excellent, clear maps. If you are looking for a different but easy one-day walk, consider some of these routes.

John Chapman

Tarkine: Forgotten Wilderness

(Roadshow Entertainment, 2000, RRP \$29.95).

This one-hour video features some excellent photography of Tasmania's west coast. The photographer, David Warth, has captured the essence of the coast and rivers and has brought back memories of my own trips to this region. This video should inspire any walkers who have contemplated walking on the west coast to go there. JC

Prices may vary from 1 July.

Publications for possible review are welcome. Send them to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.



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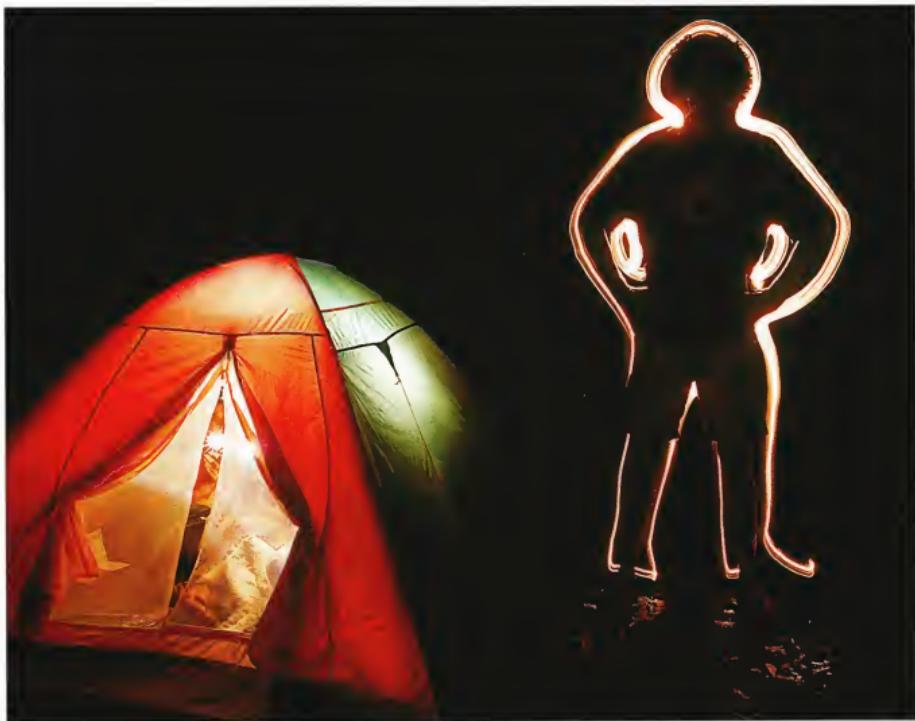
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Any guesses as to how this time exposure was taken? The photographer tells us that first he fired a few shots with a flash inside the tent to illuminate it. He then asked his companion to stand still while he traced the outline of his body with a torch. Steven Nowakowski

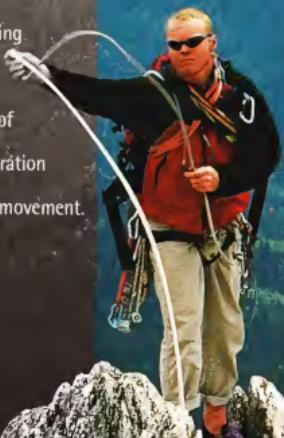
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